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In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

France...Real Madrid captain Marcelo lifts the Champions League trophy after the 1-0 defeat of Liverpool in Paris

Italy...Paulo Dybala is tossed into the air by his Juventus team-mates after playing his last game for the club

Vietnam...supporters celebrate in the streets of Hanoi after watching their team beat Thailand 1-0 in the football final of the Southeast Asian Games

France...Nantes midfielder Ludovic Blas kisses the French Cup after his side defeat Nice in the final

Italy...Milan striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic smokes a cigar at the trophy ceremony for his side's Serie A title triumph

England...Manchester City fans climb onto the goal at the Etihad after seeing their team beat Aston Villa 3-2 to win the Premier League

Germany...Eintracht Frankfurt supporters gather in the main city square to celebrate their team's Europa League victory

Argentina...fans of Boca Juniors climb the fence at La Bombonera

Germany...RB Leipzig keeper Peter Gulacsi celebrates, while Freiburg's Ermedin Demirovic holds his head after missing the decisive penalty kick in the shootout of the German Cup final

Turkey...Trabzonspor fans gather in the streets and climb trees to celebrate their team's league title victory

England...Leeds United's Raphinha celebrates with his team's supporters after securing Premier League survival on the last day of the season

Italy...Jose Mourinho is depicted as a Roman centurion holding the Europa Conference League trophy after guiding Roma to victory in the final against Feyenoord

Spain...Real Madrid's Marcelo puts a scarf and flag around a statue on the Plaza de Cibeles Square in Madrid during his team's La Liga title celebrations

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FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR

Well, there it is – another season done and dusted.

No season goes by without any drama at all, but this one managed to pack plenty in, and nowhere more so than in the Champions League.

It all seems so long ago now that Real Madrid were stunned by the virtually unknown Sheriff Tiraspol, as the Moldovan champions snatched a 2-1 victory at the Bernabeu.

The journey of both clubs since that September evening goes a long way to illustrating how extraordinary a season this has been – both on and off the pitch. While Madrid went on to win the trophy in seemingly impossible circumstances, producing astonishing comebacks against the French champions, last season's European champions and the English champions, Sheriff's season was transformed in an altogether different way, as their Ukrainian coach Yuriy Vernydub left to go and fight Russia's invasion of his home country.

The war in Ukraine has overshadowed much of the second half of the season, yet football has attempted to play its part in supporting its victims

The war in Ukraine has overshadowed much of the second half of the season, yet football has attempted to play its part in supporting its victims. Ukrainian flags have been a regular sight across European grounds, none more so than the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, where Oleksandr Zinchenko, wrapped in his country's colours, wept as he held his Premier League winners' medal and thanked the Manchester City fans for their support. It was a touching end to an extraordinary final day of the season.

Elsewhere, European royalty Milan returned to the Italian throne, joining Real, City, Paris Saint-Germain, Bayern Munich, Ajax and Porto in winning their league titles, while Eintracht Frankfurt and Roma secured historic European successes.

All of the above, and more, are covered in this issue.

Jamie Evans, Assistant Editor

Staying...PSG's Kylian Mbappe with club CEO Nasser Al Khelaifi at his contract extension press conference

SPAIN

Mbappe deal 'scandalous' – La Liga

The Spanish top flight launched a scathing attack on Paris Saint-Germain and Kylian Mbappe after the French international striker agreed a bumper new contract with the French champions, and rejected an offer from Real Madrid. The Spanish giants had a bid rejected for Mbappe last summer, but with his contract due to expire this year Madrid thought they had their man.

However, after further negotiations with both clubs, the World Cup-winning forward finally ended the transfer saga by signing a three-year contract worth a reported €4.7 million a month, prompting fury from Spain.

"La Liga wishes to state that this type of agreement attacks the economic stability of European football, putting at risk hundreds of thousands of jobs and the integrity of the sport, not only in European competitions, but also in domestic leagues," said a statement.

"It is scandalous that a club like PSG, which last season reported losses of more than €220m after accumulating losses of more than €700m in prior seasons (while reporting sponsorship income at doubtful valuation), with a squad cost around €650m for this season, can close such an agreement."

The league also confirmed that they would file a complaint against PSG, before adding: "This behaviour demonstrates once more that state owned clubs do not respect and do not want to respect the rules of a sector as important as football."

More on Mbappe on page 46-47.

"I am staying next season for sure"

Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah discusses his future

ECUADOR

FIFA open investigation into potentially ineligible player

Ecuador's place at the 2022 World Cup could be under threat after allegations about the eligibility of one of their players.

The Chilean Football Federation (FFC) demanded the investigation after claiming that full-back Byron Castillo used a false birth certificate to register for Ecuador.

"There are innumerable proofs that the player was born in Colombia, in the city of Tumaco, on July 25, 1995, and not on November 10, 1998, in the Ecuadorian city of General Villamil Playas," said an FFC statement.

According to the FFC, the eight qualifiers that Castillo played in should be forfeited by Ecuador and their opponents awarded three points. This would see seventh-placed Chile leapfrog Colombia, Peru and Ecuador into fourth place and World Cup qualification.

"FIFA has decided to open disciplinary proceedings in relation to Byron David Castillo Segura's possible breach of the call criteria for the indicated matches," said a FIFA statement.

ENGLAND

Britain's first openly gay male footballer in over 30 years

In a landmark moment in the battle against homophobia in football, Blackpool forward Jake Daniels became the first player in the men's professional game to come out as gay since Justin Fashanu in 1990.

The 17-year-old only signed his first professional contract in February, and was on loan at non-league side Bamber Bridge last season. "Since I've come out to my family, my club and my team-mates, that period of overthinking everything – and the stress it created – has gone," he told *Sky Sports*.

"Now I am just confident and happy to be myself finally."

Daniels received overwhelming support from large swathes of the football community, who praised his courage, honesty and maturity.

The month in numbers

Eye-catching facts and stats from the world of football this month...

2
Two countries – Zimbabwe and Kenya – will not take part in the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers after failing to overturn their FIFA bans.

6
Mauritius will compete in the group stage qualifying rounds of the AFCON for the first time in six years after their preliminary round opponents Sao Tome e Principe were kicked out for fielding an ineligible player.

344
Number of games that it took for Pep Guardiola to reach 250 Premier League wins – the fastest manager to do so in the league's history.

101
Yellow cards shown to Leeds United in 2021-22, a new Premier League record for a single season.

17
Teams that will take part in the 2022 Chinese Super League campaign after Chongqing Liangjiang Athletic became the country's latest club to go out of business.

£4.25bn
Value of the deal to purchase Chelsea, completed by LA Dodgers baseball team owner Todd Boehly.

323
Karim Benzema's strike v Levante saw him equal Raul's goal tally for Real Madrid and become the club's joint second-highest goalscorer of all time.

Real legend... Karim Benzema

$440m
Reparations that FIFA should pay to migrant workers in Qatar as part of a compensation fund, according to Amnesty International.

2023
The Asian Football Confederation is on the hunt for a new venue for next year's Asian Cup after China withdrew from hosting duties due to the country's "Zero-COVID" policy.

22
Seattle Sounders became the first Major League Soccer team in 22 years to win the CONCACAF Champions League.

Banned... Ubogagu

9
Months ban for Tottenham Hotspur Women's forward Chioma Ubogagu after she tested positive for banned substance Canrenone.

26
Players that have been banned following an allegation into match-fixing in Ghanaian football – 14 from Ashanti Gold and 12 from Inter Allies. Both clubs have also been relegated from the top flight to the third tier.

5
Years between Brazilian winger Kenedy's last two Premier League starts for Chelsea – in May 2017 and May 2022. Coincidentally, both appearances came against Watford.

15
Arsenal's Bukayo Saka and Emile Smith Rowe became the first U21 players to each score ten goals in a single Premier League season since Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney did so for Manchester United 15 years ago.

6
Julian Alvarez, the Manchester City striker on loan at River Plate, scored a double hat-trick in the Copa Libertadores against Alianza Lima.

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

UEFA Champions League reforms signed off for 2024-25 campaign

So, in the end, the ill-conceived European Super League did serve a purpose, albeit not the one intended by the "dirty dozen" – Milan, Arsenal, Atletico Madrid, Barcelona, Chelsea, Internazionale, Juventus, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United, Real Madrid and Tottenham Hotspur. The panic induced by the chaotic launch in April last year drove UEFA and the European Club Association (ECA) to end their tedious diplomatic dance and nail down the Champions League of tomorrow.

This means expansion. More teams. More matches. More money.

The relentless march of grandiosity is common across all of football. FIFA's World Cup has led the way, fattening up to 48 teams in Canada, Mexico and the United States in 2026. Hence UEFA, from 2024-25, will ramp up the Champions League group stage from 32 clubs to 36, with each playing eight matches instead of the current six.

Any concept of scarcity value was trampled long ago beneath the demands of football populism. Everyone involved in the game, as players or officials or fans, should take pride in the passion it engenders at every level of society.

UEFA and the ECA agreed a new format in the nick of time on the eve of congress in May. Time was running out because of a pressing need to seal all the multi-million broadcasting and sponsorship contracts for the new deal's kick-off in 2024-25.

Everything could have been signed off a year ago or more. One reason for the delay – apart from the logistical problems created by the pandemic – was the clubs' inability to present a united front. The elite wanted guarantees of participation, more matches and more money for themselves; middle and lower-ranking clubs wanted a larger slice of the cash cow.

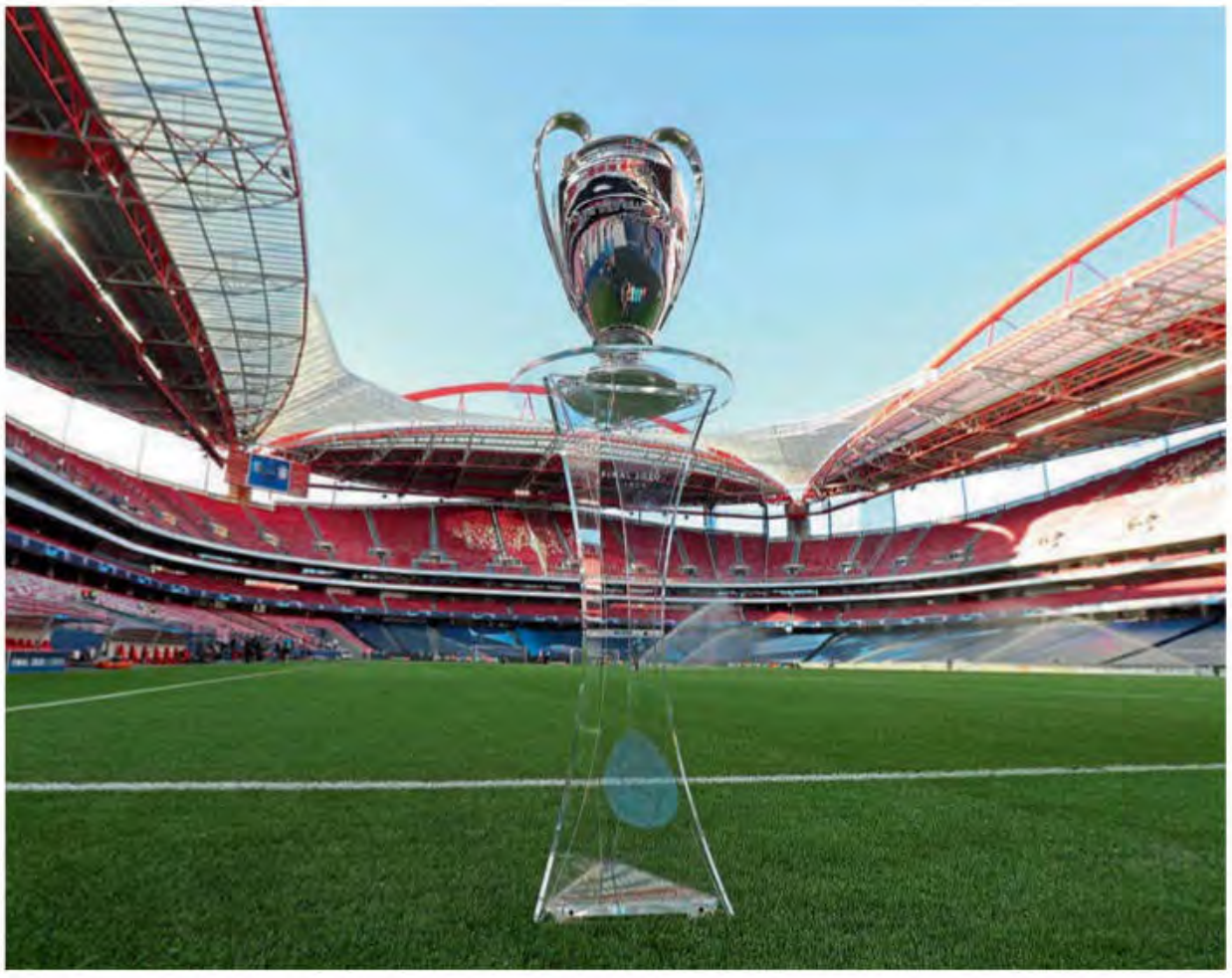
Impatience at this stalemate provoked Andrea Agnelli of Juventus and Florentino Perez of Real Madrid to gallop up the Super League cul-de-sac. Remember that Agnelli was then president of the ECA and Real Madrid held a vice-presidency. Once the Super League had been halted by popular demand and Agnelli removed, a far more skilled negotiator in Nasser Al Khelaifi took up the ECA helm and sorted it with UEFA.

Al Khelaifi is not only president of Paris Saint-Germain but CEO of Qatar's wealthy and powerful beIN Media Group. He is better-versed in the art of deal-making than anyone else in world football.

One of the fascinations of the revamped Champions League will be the use of the so-called "Swiss system". This could be revolutionary for the game.

Football's competitive formats are simple, long-established and unimaginative. Only two exist: the league system in which everyone plays everyone else, and the direct elimination, knockout cup arrangement. The play-off option permits a balancing of numbers. FIFA, for example, used play-offs in the group stage of both the 1954 and 1958 World Cup finals; UEFA employs play-offs to maintain the drama (and avoid dead matches) in its Euro qualifying competitions.

The European Champions Cup began as a two-leg knockout



Changes afoot... the Champions League reforms will arrive in 2024

> Any concept of scarcity value was trampled long ago beneath the demands of football populism

competition in 1955-56 then headed down the hybrid path of groups and knockouts from 1992. Where the Champions League leads, all Europe's other competitions follow. As they will again, from 2024-25.

This is a new era in more ways than one.

More than a decade ago a personable Chilean accountant named Leandro Shara began to think outside the box about the football calendar. He worried that dead fixtures in any league's closing stage were an open door to the corruption of match fixing.

Shara computed a variety of concepts and took them to both FIFA and UEFA. His suggestion, for the finals of World Cup or Euros, was the use of coefficient-based pots. For example, top teams, medium level and least successful. Each team would play one or more opponent from the other fluidly-adjusting pots and the results would be calibrated in a single league table.

Knockout drama could be maintained by drawing the top eight or 16 teams against each other by an open draw or, preferably, based on their position in the original table.

Suffice to say Shara was not impressed when UEFA suddenly came up with its own version of the pots system. Nor was he impressed by the manner in which it will be organised for the group stage of the Champions League from the autumn of 2024.

But then, while Shara has worked with tennis tournaments in which players are all gathered in a single-centre venue, major football events demand weeks or even months of preparatory management for security, broadcasting, tickets and transport.

UEFA's solution is as follows: All 36 clubs will play eight league stage games home and away against differently rated (or seeded) opponents. The top eight in a single league table go directly to the knockout stage. Clubs finishing from ninth to 24th will compete in two-legged play-offs to join them. Then the knockout stage picks up in standard, and highly successful, fashion.

Incidentally, the 36 will include two fifth-placed clubs based on a nation's record in the previous season. This is the compromise that headed off the "historic bonus" that Agnelli & Co had promoted.

Innovation will not end with a new system. UEFA was surprised and impressed at the success of the "finals week" system enforced by the pandemic in 2020 with semi-finals and final being played out in one week in one country. Do not be surprised one day when that emergency solution features in the shape of things to come. Revolution or evolution? Take your pick.

TO LEAD OR NOT TO LEAD

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has formally confirmed seeking re-election at congress in Zurich next year. He has already garnered support from within the African, Asian and South American confederations. No-one is expected to run against him.

Aleksander Ceferin, by contrast, resisted a call from the Nordic associations at UEFA Congress to declare pursuit of a further four-year mandate next year. His presidential address in Vienna, extolling the wondrous successes of European football over the past year, was a powerful foundation for any manifesto he might put together.

The financially record-breaking Euro 2020 permitted a 21 per cent increase to €935m for the HatTrick development programme shared among UEFA's 55 national associations. That averages at €4.24m-per-year for each FA. Consider that FIFA's own Forward programme offers half that amount (albeit available to 211 members).

No wonder Europe opposed FIFA's now-defunct biennial World Cup proposal. The 2020-21 financial year saw UEFA revenues soar to a record €5.725bn which was gravity-defying on the back of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic.

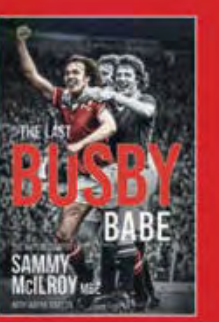
Ceferin does not appear to enjoy his own presidency as Infantino revels in his. But if the Slovene lawyer wants another four years – particularly within the dark shadow of the Russia/Ukraine crisis – then the task is surely only his for the asking.

Contrasting ambitions...FIFA president Gianni Infantino (L) with Aleksander Ceferin of UEFA

BOOKS THIS MONTH

THE CUP
By Richard Whitehead (Pitch Publishing, £25)

For 150 years the FA Cup has been at the heart of English sport. From Stanley Matthews to Arsene Wenger, Ronnie Radford to Billy the white horse – its heroes, myths and legends form the fabric of our national game. *The Cup* celebrates the story of the world's greatest football competition with more than 100 stunning and evocative photos.



THE LAST BUSBY BABE
By Wayne Barton (Pitch Publishing, £19.99)

Sammy McIlroy had one of the most memorable careers in football. After all, who else can say they played with George Best, Denis Law and Bobby Charlton, experienced relegation, won trophies and played under six different managers at Manchester United? With more than 400 appearances, McIlroy – the last player signed by the legendary Sir Matt Busby – is a bona fide Old Trafford legend. *The Last Busby Babe* finally puts on record one of the greatest careers in football history.

Jonathan WILSON
TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Assessing Ancelotti

Everybody agrees Carlo Ancelotti is one of the most likeable men in football. His touchline demeanour is calm, his press conferences feel relaxed and his players clearly love him, as the various photographs that emerged of him on Real Madrid players' social media accounts after this season's league title was confirmed demonstrated. He is the only manager to win a championship in each of Europe's top five leagues and he is the only manager ever to reach five Champions League finals. An indication, then, that nice guys can win? It might not be quite so simple as that.

In the wake of Real Madrid's league title this season, there was a widely expressed view that Ancelotti perhaps doesn't get the credit he deserves. To succeed in five different leagues, five different football environments, suggests his adaptability, the flexibility and pragmatism of his football brain.

And yet that is perhaps also why he is undervalued. Ancelotti has not changed football. He is not a man for a revolution. He is not some wild-eyed visionary desperately pursuing the one true doctrine. He likes his food and he likes his wine and openly acknowledges that football is one of the unimportant things in life. He is good at dealing with elite players, and he is good at dealing with often volatile owners, with Silvio Berlusconi, Roman Abramovich, Nasser Al Khelaifi and Florentino Perez.

He comes in, he's popular, he wins but he leaves barely a trace. He's not somebody who crafts a team in his image. There's no sense, as there is when a Pep Guardiola side meets a Jurgen Klopp side, that there is some part of his soul out there on the pitch being tested. He wrote his dissertation at Coverciano on the Christmas tree formation, but he has used that only occasionally through his career; it's very hard to say what an Ancelotti side looks like. Strip away the signifiers and a Guardiola side or Klopp side, even a Jose Mourinho side, would still be identifiable; an Ancelotti team would just look like a team playing good football. Or, at times, just a team that is winning.

La Liga champion... Carlo Ancelotti

> To succeed in five different leagues, five different football environments, suggests his adaptability, the flexibility and pragmatism of his football brain. And yet that is perhaps also why he is undervalued

Certainly with Real Madrid this season, there has been a sense that Ancelotti's calm was exactly what the team needed. When Manchester City went 2-0 up against them early on at the Etihad in the first leg of the Champions League semi-final, Ancelotti remained passively seated while Guardiola betrayed his tension on the touchline. In as much as Madrid's progress was explicable at all, the inner belief he projected was as important as the finishing of Karim Benzema, Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo. For all the data and the patterns and the shapes and the organisation of the modern game, psychology remains important.

And yet...there is another way to look at Ancelotti's career, which is that in 16 completed seasons managing the biggest clubs across

Mr Popular...Ancelotti celebrates with Karim Benzema and Vinicius Jr.

Europe, he has only won five league titles. He oversaw one of only three seasons under their Qatari owners that Paris Saint-Germain have failed to win the league title – albeit he took over only midway through.

At Bayern, Ancelotti initially seemed a breath of fresh air after the enervating intensity of the Guardiola years, but he was sacked in the September after winning the Bundesliga because players felt they were not being driven hard enough. There are few absolutes in football: what works in one circumstance may not be appropriate in another. Just as Guardiola's drive can carry a club forward but also wear players out or add to their anxiety in big games, so Ancelotti's laidback approach tends not to lend itself to sustained success.

This is a familiar pattern across all sports: although it is often the case that teams can reach their greatest heights under a relaxed coach who gives the players a level of freedom, there tends to be a consequence, that after the flowering comes decline. This was a curious season for Madrid. They were in transition and, after Zinedine Zidane resigned as manager and the collapse of the proposed Super League, in need of a safe pair of hands.

Ancelotti, who has just turned 63 was a reluctant appointment, and, after the meek defeat in the first leg of the last-16 tie away to Paris Saint-Germain, there were suggestions he might be replaced. The perception seems to be that he is past his best, which is why he was at Everton last season. It seems grudging to say it, but with Barcelona in crisis and Atletico in retreat this was as straightforward as La Liga has been for years.

The real test of Ancelotti will come next season when the league is more competitive again and he has to drive the process of renewal. That has not traditionally been a strength of his. For all the doubts, though, he remains not merely one of the most likeable but also one of the most successful managers in history.

REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

Unrecognisable... Sergio Aguero's new statue

1 TONI AGUERO?

The ten-year anniversary of Sergio Aguero's title-winning goal for Manchester City was marked by the erection of a new statue outside the Etihad Stadium, capturing the Argentine's celebration after that famous goal. A fitting tribute, except that the statue appears to more closely resemble Real Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos. "Sergio is here," announced BBC journalist Simon Stone on Twitter, to which the German midfielder replied: "Sure?"

2 PENALTY PETULANCE

While many European leagues saw dramatic conclusions, few could match the scenes at Bulgarian side Tsarsko Selo. Needing a win to avoid relegation, they were drawing 1-1 with Lokomotiv Sofia when they were awarded a penalty in stoppage-time. Tensions escalated when two players, Yusupha Yaffa and captain Martin Kavdanski, argued over who would take it, with Yaffa ending with the ball. But as he placed the ball on the spot, he was interrupted by club owner Stoyne Manolov, who stormed the pitch to insist that Kavdanski take it. Both men were escorted off the pitch by security as they argued, before Kavdanski saw his tamely-hit penalty saved. Tsarsko were subsequently relegated, with Manolov announcing the following day that the club would be dissolved.

3 SEEING RED

Speaking of chaotic endings, the MLS clash between Sporting Kansas City and Colorado Rapids descended into farce when four players were sent off in stoppage-time. Colorado defender Auston Trusty kicked the chaos off by picking up a second yellow in the 91st minute, but that was just the start. Five minutes later, Daniel Salloi stopped the Rapids from taking a quick free-kick by kicking his opponent and was duly shoved over by Lucas Esteves. In the ensuing brawl, Esteves and Kansas defender Andreu Fontas were both red-carded, before the VAR pointed out that Salloi's original kick was also a sending-off offence.

4 TICKING OFF

The BBC were forced to apologise recently after their news channel briefly displayed the words: "Manchester United are rubbish" on the breaking news ticker. "Behind the scenes, someone was training to learn how to use the ticker and to put text on the ticker," explained presenter Annita McVeigh shortly afterwards. "Apologies if you saw that and you were offended and you're a fan of Manchester United." Many viewers, however, argued that the apology was entirely unnecessary, as most fans would have agreed with the statement.

5 JEEPERS KEEPERS

It's hard to think of a more embarrassing way to be knocked out of a cup competition than what happened to Finnish outfit Ilves. Drawn against their own reserve team in the national cup competition, they looked set for a far from edifying 1-1 draw when, in the sixth minute of added time, their goalkeeper miscontrolled a back-pass and was powerless to stop the ball rolling over the line for a truly humiliating cup exit.

6 EAR BUDDY

Hartlepool United midfielder Mark Shelton can now proudly add his name to the collection of bizarre football injuries after missing a league game for the Pools. "Mark's had a cotton bud in his ear that has gone in too far," his manager Graeme Lee told *BBC Radio Tees*. "He's gone to the hospital, sounds like the tweezers have gone in too far and he's dizzy and can't stand up."

7 WHIRLWIND INVASION

This column would not be complete without a report about a match being interrupted by something unusual. This time we're going to Peru, where a clash between Semillero and San Andres was brought to a halt by a whirlwind of dust swirling across the pitch.

"We're disappointed that our support, loyalty and honesty towards Rob has been repaid in this way – with negotiations taking place behind our backs…this kind of behaviour gives football a bad name"

Forest Green Rovers lash out at Watford in an official statement announcing manager Rob Edwards' departure

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

IN

Welcome to City…a Manchester City fan brandishes an Alf-Inge Haaland shirt

City complete Haaland signing

Norway striker **ERLING HAALAND** will join Manchester City this summer after agreeing to move from Borussia Dortmund.

The Premier League champions paid the German club a transfer fee of £51.2 million, with Haaland's five-year contract worth a reported £104m based on his £400,000-a-week salary. In addition, City spent £34m on agent fees to secure the deal, which was split between Haaland's agent and his father Alf-Inge, himself a former City player.

Bundesliga runners-up Dortmund reacted to Haaland's departure by signing Red Bull Salzburg's German forward Karim Adeyemi as his replacement.

EUROPE

Aston Villa completed the permanent signing of on-loan midfielder **PHILIPPE COUTINHO** from Barcelona, while they also agreed a £26m deal for Sevilla and Brazil defender **DIEGO CARLOS**.

Bayern Munich signed Moroccan right-back **NOUSSAIR MAZRAOUI** on a free transfer from Ajax.

After winning League Two with Forest Green Rovers, **ROB EDWARDS** took charge of relegated Watford to replace the retired Roy Hodgson.

Former Celtic skipper **SCOTT BROWN** began his managerial career with League One side Fleetwood Town. Wimbledon appointed **JOHNNIE JACKSON** shortly after he was sacked by Charlton, while Reading confirmed that **PAUL INCE** will remain as permanent manager.

Former Sunderland and Bristol City manager **LEE JOHNSON** took charge of Scottish Premiership side Hibernian.

In Germany, Wolfsburg hired former Bayern Munich and Monaco coach **NIKO KOVAC, EDIN TERZIC** took charge of Borussia Dortmund again after a spell as interim coach in 2020-21, Hoffenheim installed **ANDRE BREITENREITER** as head coach, and relegated Greuther Furth appointed **MARC SCHNEIDER** as their new manager.

In Serie A, **ALESSANDRO AGOSTINI** replaced Walter Mazzarri as Cagliari head coach.

Ajax confirmed that their former assistant coach **ALFRED SCHREUDER** will join from Club Brugge to replace Erik ten Hag. Elsewhere, there are plenty of other managerial moves in the Eredivisie: **FRANK WORMUTH** will join Groningen from Heracles, where he will be replaced by **CARLOS VICENS**. **RENE HAKE** will replace **KEES VAN WONDEREN** at Go Ahead Eagles, who will join Heerenveen.

Braga appointed **ARTUR JORGE** as coach to replace Carlos Carvalhal.

STEVE McCLAREN will return to his old role as Manchester United's assistant manager under Erik ten Hag.

Permanent stay… Philippe Coutinho

AFRICA

Nigeria appointed Portuguese **JOSE PESEIRO** as their new coach.

CONCACAF

CHRIS MUELLER returned to Major League Soccer, joining Chicago Fire from Hibernian just a few months after moving to Scotland from Orlando City. Fire also signed Mexico international **JAIRO TORRES** from Atlas.

Elsewhere in MLS, Vancouver Whitecaps spent $3m on Paraguay midfielder **ANDRES CUBAS** from Nimes, Real Salt Lake re-signed former winger **JEFFERSON SAVARINO** from Atletico Mineiro, and Orlando City signed **GASTON GONZALEZ** from Argentinian side Union.

SOUTH AMERICA

LUIZ FELIPE SCOLARI returned to management, taking charge of Athletico Paranaense in the Brazilian top flight.

Back in the hot seat…Luiz Felipe Scolari

"I should have told him to go to Scunthorpe United"

Sir Alex Ferguson regrets advising Jurgen Klopp to "go to a club with history" when first meeting him, after handing the Liverpool boss his LMA Manager of the Year award

Appointments, sackings and loans

Free agent...Luis Suarez says goodbye to the Atletico fans

EUROPE

Atletico Madrid released **LUIS SUAREZ** and **HECTOR HERRERA**, while **GIORGIO CHIELLINI** and **PAULO DYBALA** will both leave Juventus.

Barcelona released 19-year-old forward **KAYS RUIZ-ATIL**, just one year after controversially signing him from Paris Saint-Germain in a deal that has been contested by the French champions. Both clubs have been summoned to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) to settle the dispute.

Borussia Dortmund announced the departure of manager **MARCO ROSE**. Elsewhere, **MARKUS WEINZIERL**, **ADI HUTTER**, **SEBASTIAN HOENESS** and **FLORIAN KOHFELDT** left German sides Augsburg, Borussia Monchengladbach, Hoffenheim and Wolfsburg respectively.

GARY BOWYER was sacked by Salford City, while Blackburn Rovers parted company with **TONY MOWBRAY** after five years in charge.

MARK McGHEE left his post as manager of Dundee following their relegation from the Scottish Premiership.

Athletic Bilbao coach **MARCELINO** stepped down from his role and Espanyol fired **VICENTE MORENO**, while Italian side Parma sacked **GIUSEPPE IACHINI** after a mid-table finish in Serie B.

Former France U21 and Sevilla defender **JORIS GNAGNON** was released by Saint-Etienne just a few months after joining as a free agent.

Former Brazil centre-back **JEMERSON** is a free agent after being released by Ligue 1 side Metz.

AFRICA

Gabon's all-time record goalscorer **PIERRE-EMERICK AUBAMEYANG** announced his retirement from international duty.

OBITUARIES

Ivica OSIM (1941-2022)

Tribute...an image of Osim projected in Sarajevo

Bosnian Osim was a fine player, winning 16 caps for Yugoslavia – including playing at Euro 1968 – and scoring eight goals; alongside a club career with the likes of Zeljeznicar, Strasbourg, Sedan and Valenciennes. Yet it is his managerial career that he is most renowned for.

After leading Zeljeznicar to a UEFA Cup semi-final, he took charge of Yugoslavia in 1986 and four years later took them to the quarter-finals of the 1990 World Cup, where they were defeated on penalties by Argentina.

His side may well have been a threat at the Euros two years later, too, but he resigned ahead of the competition after the outbreak of civil war and the nation's eventual barring from the tournament.

He went on to win trophies at Partizan Belgrade, Panathinaikos and Sturm Graz. His last coaching job was the Japan national team from 2006 to 2007, before leading the Bosnia and Herzegovina FA.

Marco CORNEZ (1957-2022)
As a goalkeeper Cornez scored 24 times during his club career, while also winning 20 caps for Chile after being an unused substitute at the 1982 World Cup. After retiring, he discovered and coached Chile women's goalkeeper Christiane Endler.

Brian BEDFORD (1933-2022)
In a 13-year career in the Football League, the Welshman spent his best years at Queens Park Rangers, scoring 180 goals in 284 appearances.

RODRI (1934-2022)
After a career at hometown club Barcelona that saw him win two league titles and two cups, Rodri went on to work as a coach under Rinus Michels.

Henk GROOT (1938-2022)
When he retired in 1969, only one player had netted more goals for Ajax than Groot, who fired the team to the Eredivisie title with 38 goals in 1959-60. He later lined up alongside Johan Cruyff to win three league titles in a row for the club.

Theodore Nzue NGUEMA (1973-2022)
One of Gabon's most capped players, and second only to Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang in the goal rankings, Nguema spent the majority of his club career with African clubs, with the exception of spells at Angers and Braga.

Ludogorets star ...Jody Lukoki

Gabon star...Theodore Nzue Nguema in action for his country in 2003

Jody LUKOKI (1992-2022)
The DR Congo international began his career at Ajax, where he collected three Eredivisie winners' medals. After a successful five-year spell in Bulgaria with Ludogorets, his went on to play for Yeni Malatyaspor in Turkey before returning to the Netherlands with FC Twente.

Anton ARIETA (1946-2022)
A striker who scored 83 goals in 358 games for Athletic Bilbao, including in both of the victorious 1969 and 1973 Spanish Cup finals.

Leo WILDEN (1936-2022)
As their starring centre-half, Wilden inspired Cologne to two league titles in the early 1960s, the second of which, in 1963-64, was the first-ever Bundesliga season. During the same period, he also won 15 caps for West Germany.

Henri DEPIREUX (1944-2022)
Former Belgium international, who played at Standard Liege and coached 22 teams in ten different countries between 1976 and 2015, including being national team coach of Cameroon and DR Congo.

Mark Gleeson

"In life I believe that our word is our bond. And in this situation, there were a lot of words said which were not respected"

Marseille president Pablo Longoria hits out after Boubacar Kamara's departure for the Premier League

Boubacar KAMARA

(Aston Villa)

The 22-year-old is as interesting for who he will not be playing for as who he will.

After joining Aston Villa following the expiration of his Marseille contract, Kamara prompted disappointment from Atletico Madrid, who thought that they already had an agreement with him.

So too did Senegal coach Aliou Cisse, who it was reported had reached an "agreement in principle" for the French youth international to join the African champions' squad for this year's World Cup, before Kamara instead accepted a call-up for France's senior squad in June.

Spanish media later reported that Atleti had, in fact, turned Kamara down rather than the other way round, after the youngster allegedly greeted sporting director Andrea Berta for discussions wearing shorts and no shoes.

The veracity of that claim has been disputed, but what certainly is true is that Villa have landed a highly-promising defensive midfielder, a Ligue 1 regular since his teens, who is equally comfortable playing in central defence.

QR CORNER

Felipe Gutierrez scores a Puskas Award contender for Chilean side Universidad Catolica against Audax Italiano

Use a tablet or smartphone to scan the QR code

Aurelien TCHOUAMENI
(Monaco)
Kamara will not be the only highly-rated French midfielder on the move this summer, with Tchouameni expected to join Real Madrid for a fee of €80m.

Xabi ALONSO
(Unattached)
Alonso is ready to embark on a senior managerial career after stepping down from his role with Real Sociedad B. Last season he rejected an approach from Borussia Monchengladbach.

ENDRICK
(Palmeiras)
The 15-year-old who has been touted as Brazilian football's next big thing has penned his first professional contract, setting his release clause at €60m.

MARQUINHOS
(Sao Paulo)
Arsenal have reportedly agreed a deal for the 19-year-old winger – who has played for Brazil's U16 and U17 teams – to join them this summer for around £3m.

Tariq LAMPTEY
(Brighton & Hove Albion)
The former Chelsea right-back turned down a call-up for England's U21s while he considers switching his international allegiance to Ghana, for whom he qualifies through his parents.

Vincent KOMPANY
(Unattached)
The former Manchester City skipper has been linked with the vacant manager's job at Burnley after parting company with Anderlecht by mutual consent.

ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

Lewandowski makes it two in a row

Robert Lewandowski has held onto the European Golden Shoe, having won it for the first time in 2020-21.

Although the Pole fell short of last season's tally of 41 league goals, a Bundesliga record, he was still comfortably ahead of his nearest competitors, in spite of the fact that the German league plays four fewer games than Europe's other major leagues. With rumours swirling over the striker's future, winning this trophy could be his final act as a Bayern player.

The top five was completed by France forwards Kylian Mbappe (second), Karim Benzema (third) and Wissam Ben Yedder (fifth), and 2019-20 Golden Shoe winner Ciro Immobile (fourth). Norwegian forward Ohi Omoijuanfo finished sixth, netting 27 goals for Molde before Christmas, then adding to his tally after joining Serbian giants Red Star Belgrade in January.

Two in a row... Lewandowski with last season's Golden Shoe

Surprise package...Ohi Omoijuanfo scored goals in two different leagues

ESM GOLDEN SHOE 2021-22: FINAL RANKINGS

(Ranking multiplication based on UEFA coefficient status)

Pos	Name	Goals	Factor	Pts
1	**Robert Lewandowski** *(Bayern Munich)*	35	2	70
2	**Kylian Mbappe** *(Paris Saint-Germain)*	28	2	56
3=	**Karim Benzema** *(Real Madrid)*	27	2	54
3=	**Ciro Immobile** *(Lazio)*	27	2	54
5	**Wissam Ben Yedder** *(Monaco)*	25	2	50
6	**OHI OMOIJUANFO** *(Molde/Red Star Belgrade)*	33	1.5	49.5
7=	**PATRIK SCHICK** *(Bayer Leverkusen)*	24	2	48
7=	**DUSAN VLAHOVIC** *(Fiorentina/Juventus)*	24	2	48
9=	**MOHAMED SALAH** *(Liverpool)*	23	2	46
9=	**SON HEUNG-MIN** *(Tottenham Hotspur)*	23	2	46
11	**ERLING HAALAND** *(Borussia Dortmund)*	22	2	44
12=	**MOUSSA DEMBELE** *(Lyon)*	21	2	42
12=	**MARKO LIVAJA** *(Hajduk Split)*	28	1.5	42
12=	**LAUTARO MARTINEZ** *(Internazionale)*	21	2	42
12=	**MARTIN TERRIER** *(Rennes)*	21	2	42
16=	**ANTHONY MODESTE** *(Cologne)*	20	2	40
16=	**CHRISTOPHER NKUNKU** *(RB Leipzig)*	20	2	40
18=	**THOMAS LEHNE OLSEN** *(Lillestrom)*	26	1.5	39
18=	**DARWIN NUNEZ** *(Benfica)*	26	1.5	39
20	**DENIZ UNDAV** *(Union Saint-Gilloise)*	25	1.5	37.5
21=	**IAGO ASPAS** *(Celta Vigo)*	18	2	36
21=	**CRISTIANO RONALDO** *(Manchester United)*	18	2	36
21=	**ANDY DELORT** *(Nice)*	18	2	36
24=	**TAMMY ABRAHAM** *(Roma)*	17	2	34
24=	**HARRY KANE** *(Tottenham Hotspur)*	17	2	34
24=	**GIOVANNI SIMEONE** *(Hellas Verona)*	17	2	34
24=	**RAUL DE TOMAS** *(Espanyol)*	17	2	34
24=	**VINICIUS JUNIOR** *(Real Madrid)*	17	2	34
29=	**VETON BERISHA** *(Viking Stavanger)*	22	1.5	33
29=	**RICARDO GOMES** *(Partizan Belgrade)*	22	1.5	33
29=	**JORDAN SIEBATCHEU** *(Young Boys)*	22	1.5	33
29=	**MICHAEL FREY** *(Royal Antwerp)*	22	1.5	33
33=	**JUANMI** *(Real Betis)*	16	2	32
33=	**SADIO MANE** *(Liverpool)*	16	2	32
33=	**GIANLUCA SCAMACCA** *(Sassuolo)*	16	2	32
33=	**ENES UNAL** *(Getafe)*	16	2	32
37=	**JOSIP DRMIC** *(Rijeka)*	21	1.5	31.5
37=	**SEBASTIEN HALLER** *(Ajax)*	21	1.5	31.5
39=	**NEMANJA BILBIJA** *(Zrinjski Mostar)*	31	1	31
39=	**MARTIN ADAM** *(Paks)*	31	1	31
41=	**ALEKSANDAR KATAI** *(Red Star Belgrade)*	20	1.5	30
41=	**MEHDI TAREMI** *(Porto)*	20	1.5	30
41=	**ASSAN CEESAY** *(Zurich)*	20	1.5	30
41=	**JAMIE VARDY** *(Leicester City)*	15	2	30
41=	**UMUT BOZOK** *(Kasimpasa)*	20	1.5	30
41=	**KEVIN DE BRUYNE** *(Manchester City)*	15	2	30
41=	**PIERRE-E. AUBAMEYANG** *(Arsenal/Barcelona)*	15	2	30
41=	**TAIWO AWONIYI** *(Union Berlin)*	15	2	30
41=	**DOMENICO BERARDI** *(Sassuolo)*	15	2	30
41=	**DIOGO JOTA** *(Liverpool)*	15	2	30
41=	**GAETAN LABORDE** *(Rennes)*	15	2	30
41=	**JONATHAN DAVID** *(Lille)*	15	2	30

Premier League Golden Boot... Son Heung-min

Roma goal king... Tammy Abraham

Trabzonspor

Trabzon-based club win their first title in almost 40 years, as traditional giants fall by the wayside

In the end, Trabzonspor capturing their seventh Super Lig title was a question of when not if. Having been top virtually all season, the tangible reward was made mathematically certain after a 2-2 draw with mid-table Antalyaspor on April 30.

The record books will mark this date as when Trabzonspor ended their 38-year wait for a league championship. It is only the second time in nearly four decades that the title has left Istanbul but, as with pretty much everything in Turkey, it is not that simple.

In 2010-11 Trabzonspor missed out on the title to Fenerbahce by virtue of goal difference. Their opponents were later withdrawn from Europe by the Turkish Football Federation amid an investigation into match fixing. Trabzonspor took their place in the Champions League group stage, securing a famous victory over Internazionale at the San Siro, but never replaced Fenerbahce at the top of the league table.

Speak to pretty much any Trabzonspor supporter and they will tell you that the 2011 title is theirs – despite all involved later being acquitted. In the decade or so since, this grievance has lingered in the minds of the notoriously volatile locals. For example, in April 2016 a league game against Fener was abandoned after a fan ran onto the pitch and assaulted an assistant referee.

It seems fitting that the man to finally deliver justice to Trabzon arrived in the city with a vendetta of his own. Despite being regarded as one of Turkey's best coaches, Abdullah Avci has long been questioned after letting several leads at the top of the league evaporate while coaching Istanbul Basaksehir. He was also sacked midway through the 2019-20 season by Besiktas.

How sweet it is for Avci that while his ex-employers have endured a dreadful defence of their title, Trabzonspor have risen. With the Big Three of Besiktas, Fenerbahce and Galatasaray all having sacked managers this season, Avci has had the last laugh.

Appointed in November 2020 to succeed former Chelsea assistant Eddie Newton, Avci has implemented his coaching blueprint. From the get-go this term the Black Sea Storm have lived up to their nickname, representing a maroon and sky-blue blend of defensive solidity and attacking flair.

Avci has built a team around a number of experienced individuals, and none more so than former Napoli superstar Marek Hamsik. Despite now being 34 and having played at Dalian Professional and IFK Goteborg in recent seasons, the Slovakia schemer has thrived in a deeper role in Avci's 4-2-3-1 formation. Securing the first league title of his career, Trabzonspor supporters have taken to Hamsik just as those in Naples did, with some children even copying his trademark Mohawk hairstyle.

Being bald, such luxury does not befall Nigerian winger Anthony Nwakaeme, who until moving to Trabzonspor in 2018 had spent his professional career middling around Romania and Israel. He has truly found a home on the Black Sea coast, getting double figures for both goals and assists and becoming a cult hero in Trabzon.

> From the get-go this term the Black Sea Storm have lived up to their nickname, representing a maroon and sky-blue blend of defensive solidity and attacking flair

Last summer, supporters unveiled a statue of Nwakaeme wearing a flat cap, in a nod to their legendary coach Ahmet Suat Ozyazici, the only man in Turkish football history to repeatedly break Istanbul's stranglehold on the title. Time will tell if Avci is able to do the same.

Title winners ...Trabzonspor celebrate a goal against Hatayspor

Thriving...veteran Slovakian midfielder Marek Hamsik

His current squad certainly possess enough talent. Alongside Hamsik's leadership in midfield stands Greece captain Anastasios Bakasetas, who has weighed in with double figures for goal involvements as the side's main No.10. Bosnian winger Edin Visca has proved a useful addition from Basaksehir in January, with former Cardiff City striker Andreas Cornelius netting 15 goals as the lone striker.

Despite the presence of influential imports, Avci's team also holds true to club traditions. Success for Trabzonspor has always come with a healthy presence of players from the region, and the heroes of 2021-22 are no different, with Abdulkadir Omur – a precocious attacking midfielder whose career has been stunted by several injuries – and central defenders Ahmetcan Kaplan and Huseyin Turkmen flying the homegrown flag. There is also club captain Ugurcan Cakir, Turkey's national goalkeeper, who continues to be linked with a move abroad.

Point proved...Trabzonspor head coach Abdullah Avci has finally silenced his critics

Reversing this trend, in the days leading up to the Antalyaspor match it was reported that Trabzon's population had more than tripled. Expats flew in from as far as North America to be part of the celebrations, with all internal flights and bus tickets destined for Trabzon selling out.

As the entire city became decked out in club colours and flares reportedly sold out, once the title was confirmed a spectacular light show took place. Even a cup semi-final defeat to Kayserispor the following week did little to dampen the mood. After years of ill feeling, the Black Sea Storm is finally stirring again.

James Kelly

Mark Noble

West Ham United captain hangs up his boots after a career devoted to the East London club

After being beaten by Eintracht Frankfurt in the Europa League semi-finals, a crestfallen Declan Rice said: "Forget me, forget the lads, I only really wanted to win this for Nobes, to be honest with you. That was on my mind throughout this whole tournament."

From the man who has taken over the captaincy on many occasions this season, it was a clear display of how loved and respected Mark Noble is at West Ham United, who made his debut in claret and blue in a League Cup tie back in 2004.

Following that game against Southend United, the then fledgling 17-year-old walked straight home from the stadium, having grown up in the shadow of Upton Park, underlining his status as West Ham through and through.

The 18 years that have ensued since that debut have included the highest and lowest of emotions, with Noble often front and centre. In summary, there have been two promotions via the play-offs, one relegation, one incredible escape, embarrassment in European qualifying, a stadium move and everything that followed, eight managers and, of course, this season's Europa League run. It speaks volumes about Noble's longevity that his testimonial was back in December 2015.

That year, he also became club captain following the departure of Kevin Nolan, and has since gone on to become just the tenth player in West Ham's history to make 500 appearances for the club. He lies in sixth in the club's record books for games played with 550, and is the only player in the top ten to have played this century.

Noble's legacy doesn't survive on leadership and longevity alone, though, as he has always possessed quality – even if not everybody appreciated it.

In the 2006-07 season – popularly referred to as the "Greatest Escape" by Hammers fans after Carlos Tevez inspired them to safety on the final day – he thumped an excellent volley in against Bolton Wanderers in a vital win, and struck an even better one against Leicester City some years later, while the elegant run and cool finish against Watford was another example of his outstanding technique.

Then, of course, there are the penalties, with Noble being just about as reliable as it gets from the spot, converting 40 of his 45 career penalties according to *Transfermarkt*.

If there is one game that encapsulates his general impact on the club more than any other, it is the final game at Upton Park. The midfielder provided the performance of a lifetime as West Ham edged out Manchester United 3-2, then delivered a stirring speech as part of the closing ceremony, ensuring that the Boleyn Ground received a fitting swansong.

> He lies in sixth in the club's record books for games played with 550, and is the only player in the top ten to have played this century

His final game at the London Stadium will not be in a West Ham shirt, but in an England one. Despite captaining his country at Under-21 level and going on to win 20 caps for the Young Lions, Noble was repeatedly overlooked by successive England managers throughout.

While leading out the home side for the Soccer Aid charity match won't be quite as significant, it will at least give Noble the chance to go out on a well deserved high in front of his home fans.

Danny Lewis

Hammers heroes... Mark Noble and Declan Rice celebrate during West Ham's Europa League run

FC Koper

Zoran Zeljkovic steers outsiders into Europe

Sunk without trace in 2017, seasiders FC Koper were revived to claim three straight promotions, then take the title race to the wire this May. In Slovenia's own mini-version of the final-day drama that played out in England, Koper had to go to mid-table Bravo and win – and hope that leaders Maribor would slip up at bitter local rivals and last year's champions, Mura.

It wasn't to be. Slovenia's record champions claimed their 16th crown with a 3-1 win, while Koper were held to a goalless draw.

Frustratingly for the runners-up, they could have gone into the last game without having to depend on favours from Mura. With the title in sight in the previous round of fixtures, Koper only needed to beat lowly Radomlje to open up a gap over Maribor. Despite home support at the Bonifika, Koper's stadium a stone's skim from the Adriatic, the Canaries lost 3-1. The last game was always going to be an uphill struggle.

Still, Koper can be content with winning the Slovenian Cup and wiping the slate clean after the financial collapse of 2017.

At the helm of this resurgence is Zoran Zeljkovic. In his first season as a top-flight coach, this former Domzale midfielder moulded a completely new team and had them playing and winning within weeks of arriving in the summer of 2021.

"I was most attracted by the challenge of the first league, as I was aware that this was a step forward in my career," Zeljkovic told *World Soccer*. "Koper is a very good club in Slovenian terms, with a rich history, so I didn't need to give it a second thought."

Indeed, Koper won the Slovenian league title in 2010 and competed in European club competitions seven times between 2006-07 and 2015-16. Then, under city mayor and profligate club owner Boris Popovic, in thrall to persuasive players' agents, Koper's squad and wage bill ballooned. Creaking veterans such as former Liverpool star Albert Riera failed to cope with the modest demands of the Slovenian league. The club failed to make Europe in 2016-17, failed to pay wages and failed to gain a professional licence for the 2017-18 campaign.

> The club failed to make Europe in 2016-17, failed to pay wages and failed to gain a professional licence for the 2017-18 campaign

Cup champions... Koper players lift the Slovenian Cup
Credit: FCKoper.SI

Coach...Zeljkovic watches on during the Slovenian Cup final

The withdrawal of sponsorship by the city's harbour authorities proved to be the last straw.

"Fans took a while to rally round this latest team," said leading Koper supporter David Klemenc. "They'd had enough of local politics. But the atmosphere for the Radomlje game was at Everest levels."

It took a whirlwind season under Zoran Zeljkovic to get there, though. Previously the coach at lower-league Ilirija and Krka, the 42-year-old Zeljkovic had to make a significant leap up once owner Ante Guberac had placed his faith in him.

"The difference is huge, from the quality of the players to the training conditions," he said of the top-flight PrvaLiga.

"I knew the Koper team as I watched the first league a lot, and we also played a qualifying match with them." His last game in charge of Krka before leaving for Koper was a promotional play-off between the two in June 2021. His less illustrious charges almost reversed a 0-2 scoreline from the first leg, going 3-0 up but conceding late. Koper had stayed up but lacked spark.

"I wanted younger, faster players as the team was old and slow. We started building up the defence as Koper were conceding too many goals."

It didn't take long for Zeljkovic to turn things around: "We brought in 13 new players and I realised we needed time. After about ten games, the team looked the way I wanted it to."

Koper won seven consecutive games, starting with a win over then-champions Mura, followed by victories at Olimpija Ljubljana, then at home to Maribor. Certain signings already stood out: much-travelled Croatian defender Karlo Brucic, ex-Boston United striker Lamin Colley and, brought over from Krka, Jamaican forward Kaheem Parris.

Another Krka hire, Luka Ticic, had even followed Zeljkovic from Ilirija in 2019. Turning 21 during the 2021-22 campaign, a regular for Slovenia in that age group, the defender came in for special praise from his mentor. "Ticic is fast and technically a very good player. I believe he has a bright future ahead," says Zeljkovic.

These four players all started in the cup final for Koper, Colley hitting two goals in the 3-1 win over Bravo, the club's first major silverware since the 2017 meltdown.

Few in Koper have any illusions about the size of the task ahead to maintain this momentum, least of all Zeljkovic. "My goal was to stabilise the team and get a European place in two years. We managed to do that in the first season. I think we need to strengthen the playing staff, because we have to compete on three fronts. The depth of the squad is vital."

Agents looking to offload any creaking veterans need not apply.

Peterjon Cresswell

The Bonfika stadium...Koper's home ground
Credit: Peterjon Cresswell

FC Sudtirol

North Italian club will play in Serie B for the first time after upsetting the odds

For the first time in their history, Sudtirol have been promoted to Serie B, the second level of Italian football, after topping Serie C with 90 points from their 38 matches, five more than second-placed Padova.

Fussball Club Sudtirol is based in the city of Bolzano, in the South Tyrol autonomous province from which they took their name. Together, South Tyrol and Trentino form the Trentino-Alto Adige region of Italy, an area that was disputed by Austria and Italy for many years, while North Tyrol lies on the other side of the border. As a result, around 62 per cent of the population speak German as their first language, compared to 23 per cent speaking Italian, primarily in the two major cities of Bolzano and Merano.

Mastermind... Sudtirol's Croatian coach Ivan Javorcic

After securing promotion, Sudtirol will be the first club from Trentino-Alto Adige to take part in the second tier since it became a national league in 1948, completing a remarkable journey.

The club was born in 1995 as Football Club Sudtirol-Alto Adige, with the traditional Tyrol colours white and red, and based in Bressanone. Starting in the seventh tier, the German-named club started to climb the levels of Italian football, reaching Serie C2, the lowest professional tier, in 2000 under coach Giuseppe Sannino. That year, the club moved to the city of Bolzano.

Luca Lomi is a Sudtirol legend, having played and coached the club, and was part of the side that, for the first time, became professional: "I'm very happy, because the promotion to Serie B is the continuation of a project started over 25 years ago and of which I was part. It was a well-designed miracle, as I expected.

"I think this region has the potential to be able to try to take another step forward. I have good memories, especially because it was an almost family-run club headed by a group of friends with the president Leopold Goller who lived football in a genuine way. He built a team based on all local boys with some players from outside: sincerely, at those times, we couldn't ever think of getting to Serie B."

Ivan Javorcic is the Croatian head coach who led Sudtirol to promotion, building his team around an almost impenetrable defence, with only nine goals conceded in the league all season.

"The director Paolo Bravo worked very well, maintaining a structure and inserting few selected players every year, ending with the choice of Javorcic", says Lomi.

> "I'm very happy, because the promotion to Serie B is the continuation of a project started over 25 years ago"
>
> **Luca Lomi, former Sudtirol player and coach**

Sudtirol have just completed a restyling of their home ground, Stadio Druso, a symbol of their ambitions: "Serie A would be truly madness," says Lomi, quoting a phrase used by Javorcic for the promotion to Serie B.

Emanuele Giulianelli

eye witness

Simon Yaffe reports

FRANCE

Racing back to the top

Decades before the arrival of the mega-rich Qataris at Paris Saint-Germain, the French capital was home to another football club that had their sights set on European domination.

Under businessman Jean-Luc Lagardere, Racing Club de France recruited stellar names such as Enzo Francescoli, Pierre Littbarski and Luis Fernandez, and adopted a new name: Matra Racing, after Lagardere's Matra conglomerate.

It was a short-lived experiment. The club, which is the seventh-most decorated in the country, collapsed in 1989 and reverted to their previous incarnation. But now they are gradually rising back up the country's football pyramid.

Racing, who were Ligue 1 champions in 1936 and who have won the French Cup on five occasions, are set to benefit from a shake up by the French Football Federation that will see the country's two professional leagues, Ligue 1 and Ligue 2, become 18-team competitions, while the semi-professional third tier is expected to fully professionalise.

The changes will arrive for the 2023-24 season – just in time for the centenary of the 1924 Olympic Games, when Racing's Stade Yves-du-Manoir ground hosted the opening ceremony. Having just been promoted as champions to the Championnat National 2 (fourth tier), Racing are dreaming of a return to the national stage in time for the new-look structure.

Current owner Patrick Norbert, a former film producer and ex-president of Angers, tells *World Soccer*: "Having previously owned a professional football club, I promised myself not to let myself be taken in any more, but passion got the upper hand.

Ambitious ex-owner... Jean-Luc Lagardere

"Other clubs in the French fourth or fifth tiers do not have to face the same pressure as us – Racing is a special club because it has a glorious past."

Norbert's son, Guillaume – a former Arsenal youth team product – is Racing's head coach. And he is convinced the club can make a return to Ligue 1.

He says: "I believe that our project is probably the most exciting in the world of amateur football. We know that the road will be long and the path difficult, but our determination is unfailing. Besides, it is a great human adventure that I get to share with my father and with people I am very close to."

Glory years...former France midfielder Luis Fernandez spent three years at Racing

It was in 1983 that Lagardere bought Racing as he wanted them to compete with PSG. Algerian stars Rabah Madjer and Halim Benmabrouk were among the first to arrive, followed by French international midfielders Maxime Bossis and Luis Fernandez. Determined to make the club one of the biggest in Europe, Lagardere later hired Portuguese coach Artur Jorge, who had just led Porto to victory in the 1987 European Cup final.

Former Dutch international defender Sonny Silooy, who spent two years at the club after arriving from Ajax in 1987, admits he joined purely for financial reasons. Silooy, who is now director of youth development at Sharjah FC in the United Arab Emirates, tells *World Soccer*: "I wasn't going for footballing reasons – Ajax had just won the European Cup Winners' Cup. There was a new generation coming through there, so I only left for the riches on offer.

"When I signed we had Philippe Mahut, Luis Fernandez, Pascal Olmeta and Maxime Bossis. In the second season, we signed players like David Ginola and Vincent Guerin."

Racing left Yves-du-Manoir – which also hosted games at the 1938 World Cup – and relocated to the Parc des Princes, which they shared with Paris Saint-Germain. As Matra Racing, they regularly beat their neighbours, as well as the big guns in Monaco, Nantes and Bordeaux. Paris FC and Red Star Paris were the other two football clubs in the city, but it was PSG and Racing who garnered all the headlines.

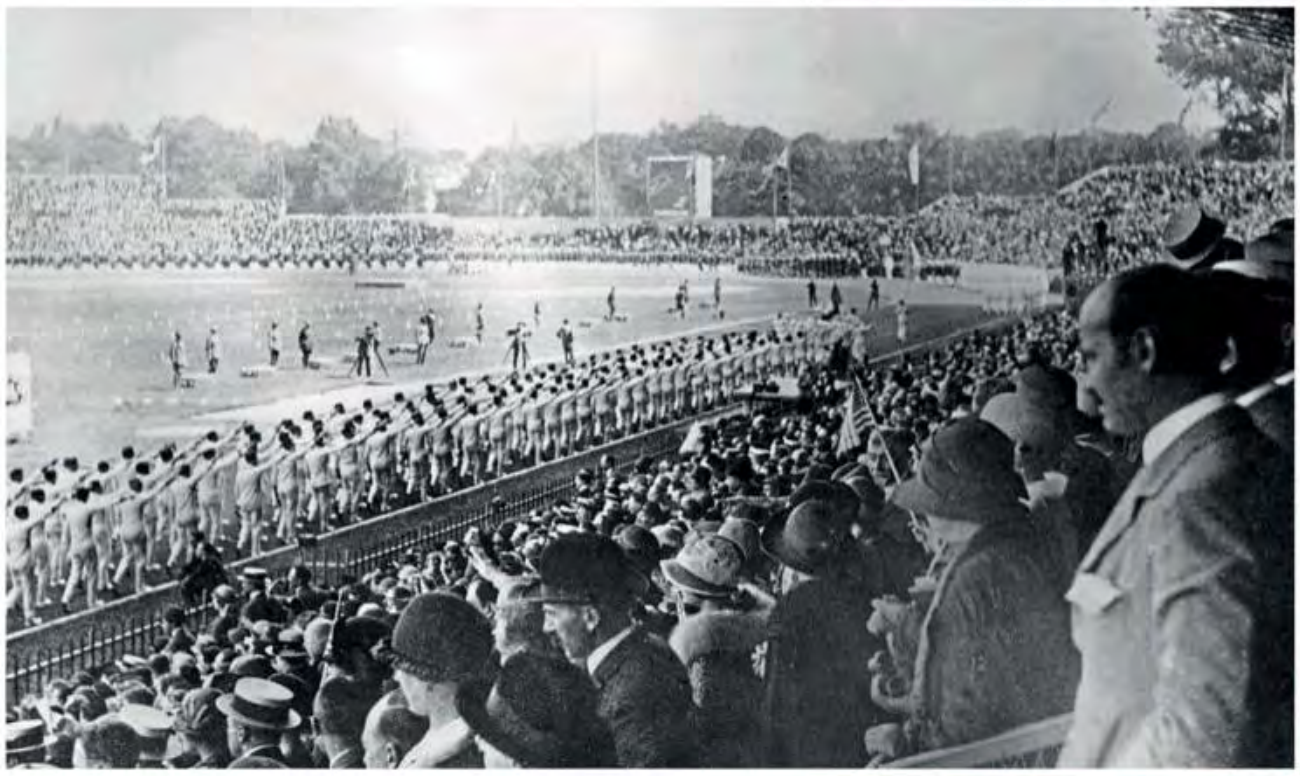
The ambition continued, with midfielder Ruben Paz joining his fellow Uruguayan Francescoli, while Racing also failed in a bid to sign Eric Cantona from Auxerre.

Yet, despite all these star names, Racing failed to attract big crowds, with their average attendance in the late 1980s only around 7,000. After narrowly avoiding relegation in 1989, Lagardere pulled the plug on his investment and Matra were no more.

"When you have a lot of top players, you can have a lot of problems," adds Silooy. "It all became about 'me, me, me', which I was not used to at Ajax. It was then that I knew we were not going to be able to win trophies, so I went back to Ajax when they came in for me. The people at the top in Racing were knowledgeable about football, but not by much."

It is estimated that the club lost over 300 million Francs in the late 1980s and by 1992, Racing had lost their professional status and were back in their historic old stadium in Colombes, a north-western suburb of Paris.

Since the Matra days, the club has been known by several names, including Racing Paris 1, Racing 92, Racing Club de France football 92, Racing Club de Paris, and Racing Club de France Colombes 92, before finally settling on Racing Club de France Football in 2018.



Historic stadium...the opening ceremony of the 1924 Olympics

> "Other clubs in the French fourth or fifth tiers do not have to face the same pressure as us – Racing is a special club because it has a glorious past"
>
> Patrick Norbert, Racing Club de France chairman

These days, the club is determined to ensure that it is known for more than just the exploits of the 1980s.

"If you dive into the history of the club, you will be able to see some rather exceptional stories," says Vincent Le Borloch of Racing's management committee. "Between 1930 and the beginning of the 1960s, Racing used to face Arsenal every November to collect money for disabled war veterans.

"Racing also used to travel to England in order to play exhibition games against teams like Tottenham, Newcastle and Sunderland. I do not think that any French side has played more games against English teams than Racing."

They have also provided the French national team with 57 international players, including Steven Nzonzi, who won the World Cup with France in 2018. Other prominent names who came through at Racing include William Gallas, Stephane Porato, Zoumana

Star-studded line-up...Uruguay legend Enzo Francescoli

Starting out... David Ginola joined Racing in 1988

Camara and Jeremie Aliadiere.

"We have between 1,000 to 1,200 young players from Colombes and the Hauts-de-Seine department," Norbert Senior explains. "Currently, the Ile-de-France region and the Sao Paulo suburb in Brazil are the two places that produce the largest number of professional football players in the world."

Aliadiere, who went on to forge a successful career at Arsenal and Middlesbrough, has family links with Racing. Both his father and uncles played for the club's basketball section, where his grandfather was a coach. The young Jeremie attended the prestigious Clairefontaine football academy and played for Racing's junior sides at the weekend.

"I am really happy that Racing have gained promotion and I look forward to seeing how high they can go," the 39-year-old says. "I do think that they will need financial help along the way to get back to where they belong. For a city like Paris to have only one top club is not enough – look at it compared to London, where there are many top clubs."

Another positive is that the club's Stade Yves-Du-Manoir ground is currently undergoing major work. The Hauts-de-Seine department is investing nearly €100 million in a bid to modernise the area ahead of the 2024 Olympic Games.

And there will be a new English-style stadium with 10,000 seats – which Racing will occupy – with plans afoot to expand it to a 25,000 capacity, as well as five synthetic pitches for the academy.

Racing graduate ...Steven Nzonzi

"The stadium will be delivered to us immediately after the 2024 Olympics," president Norbert explains. "Racing have a duty to regain the status of a great team in French football. We are speaking and looking for a solid and exclusive partnership with a major European club. It is the only way for us to keep our best players until the age of 18, while waiting to have our own academy.

"We favour a partnership with an English club because they have implemented strict rules regarding the recruitment of young talents on its soil. It prohibits them from concluding any transfer before players turn 18. This way, young players would have more time to learn and to adapt themselves to their future club."

In the 2021-2022 campaign, Racing faced PSG's B team in the Championnat National 3. But in a few years' time – and with a little luck and more investment along the way – they may well be dining again at France's top table and battling the senior PSG team once more.

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2021-22

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REAL MADRID MAKE IT 14

Vinicius Junior fires Real Madrid to their 14th European crown, as crowd problems threaten to overshadow final in Paris

Match winner... Vinicius Junior tucks home Real Madrid's goal

Hala Madrid, indeed. No denying their right to parade a record-extending 14th Champions League trophy. Victory over Liverpool in the Stade de France climaxed a sequence of footballing assassinations. They unleashed a minimum of shots against Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea, Manchester City and the Reds and made them all count. Ruthlessly.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti and his team turned club history on its head. Alfredo di Stefano's original giants were demolished in 1964 by the ruthless hold-and-hit strategy of Internazionale. Now Madrid took "their" cup home by restraining magical Luka Modric, "Sir Toni" Kroos and Casemiro to smother and conserve energy while unleashing counter-attack precision.

Karim Benzema ended the campaign with a remarkable 15 goals (44 in all competitions, a personal best) for a 34-year-old who had been written off years ago while Vinicius Junior's winning goal – an embarrassment for Trent Alexander-Arnold – was the 21-year-old Brazilian's fourth of the campaign.

In a few weeks this will all be old history. Teams and time will have moved on. What must not be forgotten are clear lessons from chaos outside a stadium whose basic design, with dogleg walkways and constricted access points, is inadequate. Hence the crowd crushes and hold-ups provoked by alleged forged tickets, mischievous local troublemakers, unintelligent stewarding, plus security goons' panicky resort to tear gas and pepper spray.

Not that English football can be self-righteous after awful memories of the Euro 2020 final.

By contrast, Madrid fans had packed the west end to capacity long before kick-off but they were also fewer in number and not cursed by latecomers either without tickets or with forgeries. In the nonsense of the Parisian night hundreds of fans even struggled, long after the final whistle, to leave the stadium, being misdirected from one closed exit to another.

Originally the final had been scheduled by UEFA for St Petersburg; Russian President Vladimir Putin's attempted land-grab in Ukraine put paid to that. But the decision to switch venues was taken back in February. The French – and UEFA – need seek no excuses here. They should only be relieved and grateful that nobody was seriously hurt or worse.

As for the football, kick-off was delayed for 36 minutes, which still featured singer Camila Cabello in an unnecessary "opening ceremony". This was the Champions League final, biggest club game in world football. UEFA need not compete with the Olympics or World Cup; this is about elite sport, short and simple, with its own superior drama – no-one needs the dancing girls.

Man of the match... Thibaut Courtois scrambles to make another save

Crowd problems... Liverpool fans queue outside the stadium

The delay forced the teams to warm up twice and accounted for the scrappy opening exchanges. Liverpool drove forward with a will to avenge their defeat by Madrid in Kyiv in 2018 and the search for amends after missing out on both a unique quadruple and the Premier League crown. In a teasing echo of events, they were edged by Manchester City by one point in the league and by Madrid to the tune of one goal.

Liverpool, with Madrid's deceptive acquiescence, took early command. Thibaut Courtois foreshadowed the evening ahead with sharp saves from Mo Salah, supported by a sliver of fortune when Sadio Mane hit a post. Courtois' safe hands denied Salah again while Madrid continued playing to a different rhythm. They repeatedly sought

Disallowed...Karim Benzema's goal is ruled out by an offside flag

Vinicius, wide on the left, in vain. But they knew his time would come. After all, they were entitled.

Madrid were first to put the ball in the net through Karim Benzema just before half-time. An inordinately lengthy wait for the VAR check eventually rescued Liverpool with a generous offside ruling. Another day, another VAR team, and they could have been going in at half-time a goal down.

Liverpool pressed forward with serious intent immediately after the interval but it was Madrid who took the lead in the 59th minute. Here was a classic counter. Federico Valverde fired across goal, a deflection wrong-footed Benzema but Vinicius sneaked in behind Trent Alexander-Arnold to inflict the decisive opening strike.

Modric & Co redoubled the midfield smother but still needed the brilliance of Courtois to deny Salah, substitute Diogo Jota and Salah again, magnificently, before celebrating Madrid's fifth win in eight years. Liverpool were left with the comparative deflation of "only" a League Cup and FA Cup double. Three finals. No goals. Only teeming regrets.

Ancelotti, by contrast, sat down at his ease on the awards podium awaiting his medal-bedecked players to join him. Madrid were kings of Europe yet again and Ancelotti could enjoy history of his own with a record four Champions Cups to supplement his two as a player. Who needed Kylian Mbappe?

Keir Radnedge

> "It is easier to win the Champions League with Real Madrid than another club because of the history and the fans' connection. They are born with this passion"
>
> Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti

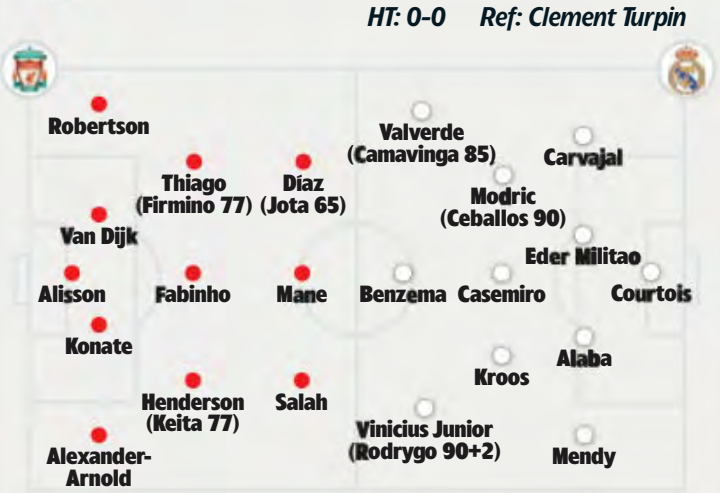
Contrast...Liverpool and Madrid players react to the referee's final whistle

2022 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

May 28 – Stade de France, Paris

LIVERPOOL	0
REAL MADRID (Vinicius Junior 59)	1

HT: 0-0 *Ref: Clement Turpin*

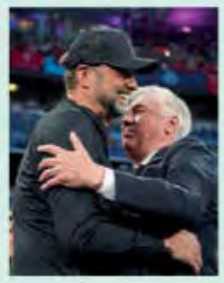


Manager: Jurgen Klopp — Manager: Carlo Ancelotti

WHAT THEY SAID

CARLO ANCELOTTI
(Real Madrid manager)
"We deserved to win this competition in every sense. We had to dig in from the last 16 until tonight and we never gave up. We managed the game very well. They found it hard to play behind us. When we kept possession better in the second half that changed the game. I think it is easier to win the Champions League with Real Madrid than another club because of the history and the fans' connection. They are born with this passion. I am very pleased to win this trophy four times but I am even more thrilled to have come back to Madrid and to have had such a spectacular season. As for Thibaut Courtois, I can't believe what he did. Unbelievable."

JURGEN KLOPP
(Liverpool manager)



"It was 50-50 possession, we had a lot more shots on target but the decisive stat is on Real Madrid's side. They scored a goal we didn't. That is the easiest explanation in the world of football. It is harsh but when the goalkeeper is man of the match something goes wrong for the other team. Congratulations to Real Madrid. The counter-attacking threat they have is immense. We played a good game but when you lose 1-0, you have to accept it is not good enough. But these boys played an outstanding season. We will go again. Where is it next season? Istanbul? Book the hotel."

THIBAUT COURTOIS
(Real Madrid goalkeeper)

"I needed to win a final for my career, for all the hard work to put respect on my name, as I don't think I get enough respect, especially in England. In the press conference before the game I said that when Madrid play finals they win. I was on the good side of history. I saw a lot of tweets coming my way that I would get humbled. Instead it was the other way round."

ON THE CROWD PROBLEMS

LIVERPOOL: Supporters should not have to experience the scenes we have witnessed. We have officially requested a formal investigation into the causes of these unacceptable issues.

UEFA: Turnstiles at the Liverpool end became blocked by thousands of fans who had purchased fake tickets that did not work. This created a build-up of fans trying to get in. UEFA is sympathetic to those affected by these events and will review these matters urgently together with the French police and authorities, and with the French football federation.

FRANKFURT EDGE OUT RANGERS IN THROWBACK FINAL

Two unfancied teams reaching the Europa League final offers a reminder of the competition's potential magic

Opener...Joe Aribo converts for Rangers

It may not have been a great game, but it was a great occasion – and that is at least as important. There have been times when the Europa League has felt like a consolation, the competition the big teams don't really want to win but will accept as mitigation for a poor season. Not this year in Seville. Eintracht Frankfurt and Rangers are not clubs already sated on European success. For both, reaching the final was a success, for their fans being there an adventure that might not be repeated any time soon.

Predictions that as many as 150,000 supporters might descend on southern Spain turned out to be exaggerated, but the city was still full. There were some violent clashes, but they were relatively limited and for the most part fans mixed happily. Certainly within the stadium, the atmosphere was raucous but respectful. For the most part, this was exactly what you would want of a major European occasion: excitement, colour and noise and a sense from most fans that they realised this was a rare privilege, that they could not rely on there being another European final in a year or two.

Such occasions can make heroes of unlikely figures. For a time it looked as though that figure might be Joe Aribo. When he left Charlton Athletic for Rangers in 2019, his manager Lee Bowyer told him he was making a big

Winners...Eintracht Frankfurt players celebrate with the Europa League trophy

mistake. But 12 minutes after half-time, as he capitalised on a slip by Tuta to put Rangers ahead, it seemed that he might have written his name alongside those of Colin Stein and Willie Johnston as a Rangers player to have scored in a winning European final performance.

But it was not to be. Frankfurt had looked the more dangerous up to then, with Filip Kostic getting the better of his battle on the flank with James Tavernier. He had already put in 15 crosses when his low cross from the left was turned in by Rafael Santos Borre as Connor Goldson, slightly mystifyingly, let the ball run beyond him.

At that point, the sense was that Frankfurt might run away with it but Rangers rallied and looked the stronger in extra-time. They should have won it at the death; Kemar Roofe's low cross deflecting into the path of Ryan Kent in injury-time at the end of extra-time. He was six yards out with an apparently open goal to aim at. But Kevin Trapp recovered well as the ball spun away from him, scuttled across his goal, spread himself and blocked with his chest.

It was, by any standards, a remarkable save. In the context of the game, it was exceptional. And so the glory that had hovered over Aribo and hesitated on Santos Borre, passed on to Trapp. When he returned to Frankfurt after four years at Paris Saint-Germain, his suspicion must have been that his hopes of European success were gone. But sometimes, even in the super club era, football can defy economics.

Having made that save, the momentum was clearly in his favour heading into penalties and, sure enough, he blocked Aaron Ramsey's tame effort with his legs – a miss that, inevitably, will raise further questions about the wisdom of bringing on substitutes late in extra-time apparently for the specific purpose of taking a penalty. Might Ramsey have come on earlier? Might his capacity for late runs into the box have troubled Frankfurt? Perhaps: that he was not trusted even for a longer substitute role is an indication that his enormously costly loan from Juventus has not worked out.

But this was not a night for recrimination. It was a throwback European final, the flares, the smoke, the riot police, the sense of anxiety and occasion; exactly what European finals used to be about. In the end it mattered less that the team who finished 11th in the Bundesliga beat the second-best team in Scotland than that they were the two teams there. This was a final to give hope, that football, still, is not just about the super-elite, that the next tier still has a purpose and can still thrive.

Jonathan Wilson

Decisive...striker Rafael Santos Borre celebrates scoring Frankurt's equaliser

> "We could've won it, but what a save [Kevin Trapp made from Ryan Kent] – what can you do? I'm absolutely devastated. I'm so, so, so heartbroken"
>
> Rangers midfielder John Lundstram

Inconsolable...Kemar Roofe attempts to comfort team-mate Aaron Ramsey

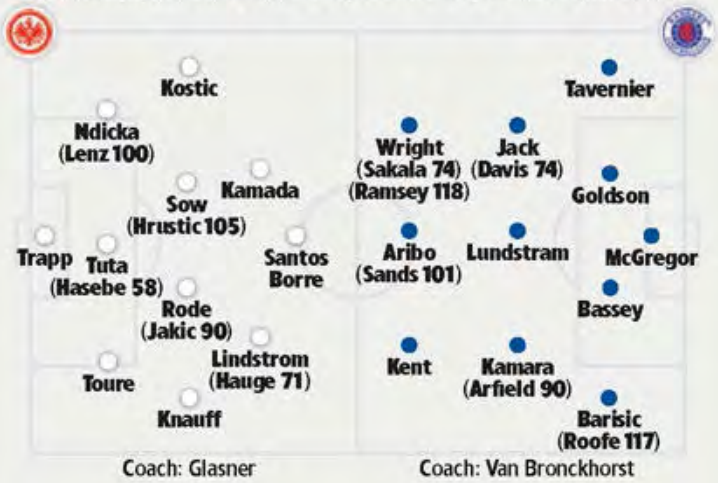
2022 EUROPA LEAGUE FINAL

May 18 – Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT (Santos Borre 69) **1**

RANGERS (Aribo 57) **1**

AET. Eintracht Frankfurt win 5-4 on penalties HT: 0-0 Ref: Slavko Vincic



WHAT THEY SAID

OLIVER GLASNER
(Eintracht Frankfurt coach)
"There is no next level, it's impossible. This year started difficult, but the players kept believing in themselves, in what we told them, what we trained. That shows the character and mentality that they have. The spirit developed – today we had players who weren't eligible for Europe but they were never negative, they were not selfish, they did everything for success. That's why I wasn't surprised that even when it was difficult, our fans were louder than Rangers' and they pushed us forward."

GIOVANNI VAN BRONCKHORST
(Rangers manager)
"If you play in a final and lose it hurts. It went all the way to penalties and it's a big disappointment. You're so close to winning a trophy but that's football. If you play finals you will have memories that stay with you forever if you win. But if you lose it will hurt a lot. I lost a World Cup final, the biggest disappointment there is.

"We prepared well for the penalties. [Aaron Ramsey] had to [take one] and he is one of the first takers. We trained for the penalty kicks. Some players don't need it. You want players who take penalties and are comfortable. We had a good few players who wanted to take a penalty and others who didn't. We had our list but we also had to adjust it because of the subs. Aaron, of course, is disappointed but he took responsibility to take the penalty and you can make it or you can miss it. Unfortunately for us, he didn't make it. You do everything you can to win it and with penalties it's a lottery, and tonight we were not on the lucky side."

JOHN LUNDSTRAM
(Rangers midfielder)
"It's a hard one to take. In the 120 minutes both teams didn't perform great. I thought we could've performed better. It's heart-breaking. We could've won it, but what a save [Kevin Trapp made from Ryan Kent] – what can you do? I'm absolutely devastated. I'm so, so, so heartbroken."

MOURINHO DELIVERS FOR ROMA AND ITALY

Wily Portuguese coach provides a positive end to a difficult year for Italian football

Mastermind... Mourinho lifts the Europa Conference League trophy

From Mourinho to Mourinho. The Italian football season ended on a massively positive note as Roma lifted the first edition of UEFA's new tournament, the "third-tier" Europa Conference League, by beating Dutch club Feyenoord 1-0 in Tirana, Albania, in the final.

This, of course, is the first Italian club victory in Europe since Internazionale triumphed in the 2010 Champions League. Then, as now, the man who masterminded this anxiously anticipated triumph was the Special One himself, 59-year-old Portuguese maestro Jose Mourinho.

Watching the chaotic scenes of post-match celebration both in Tirana and Rome (50,000 plus fans watched the game on giant screens at the Stadio Olimpico), you might have imagined that Italy had just won a fifth World Cup.

The reality is that this has been a topsy-turvy 12 months in Italian football. Last year Italy celebrated a memorable Euro 2020 win, but within months the same team had failed to qualify for the Qatar World Cup, while the Italian clubs all fared miserably in this season's Champions and Europa Leagues, with Atalanta the only side to reach the quarter-final stage.

In such a context, Roma's Europa Conference League win was greeted with huge relief. Sports daily *Gazzetta dello Sport* summed up the mood the next day with one front-page banner headline, reading simply, "*Grazie* Roma". For Roma, this was their first European victory since the 1961 Inter-Cities Fairs Cup while it was their first win in any competition since they lifted the Italian Cup in 2008.

The club's sense of relief was probably matched by that of their famous coach. When he returned to Italian football last summer, Mourinho had been greeted with open arms. Even if Premier League critics were suggesting that he had long since past his sell-by date, Roma fans were undaunted. They greeted him with a huge street mural, depicting him on a scooter in an image taken from the 1953 Audrey Hepburn-Gregory Peck film, *Roman Holiday*.

Winners...Roma players celebrate

Winner...Nicolo Zaniolo watches his shot hit the net

Despite that enthusiasm, Roma's season was not all plain sailing. By the sixth gameweek of the season, they had already lost twice, first to Verona and then, more painfully, to city cousins, Lazio. Likewise, there were hiccups in the Conference League, most famously when an understrength side managed to lose 6-1 to the Arctic Circle Norwegians, Bodo/Glimt, in the group stage last October.

In the end, Roma redeemed themselves, comfortably defeating the same opponents 5-2 on aggregate in the quarter-finals in April, before beating Leicester City 2-1 in their semi-final tie. In the other semi-final, Feyenoord had eliminated Marseille 3-2.

> Sports daily *Gazzetta dello Sport* summed up the mood the next day with one front-page banner headline, reading simply, "*Grazie* Roma"

On the eve of the final and on the last day of the Serie A season, Roma then gave themselves a huge morale boost, beating Torino 3-0 away to secure their Europa League place for next season. That win bucked a negative five-match trend in Serie A of three draws and two defeats, setting them up for the final.

In the final, even when a younger, fresher-looking Feyenoord opened up menacingly, Mourinho's team not only held their nerve but also struck first blood with a well-taken goal from Nicolo Zaniolo in the 32nd minute, following an intelligent 40-yard pass from defender Gianluca Mancini. From that point on, Roma defended in typical Mourinho fashion and hung on in there.

The fact that Feyenoord had 67 per cent possession in the entire game and that Roma's two best players on the night were central defender Chris Smalling and goalkeeper Rui Patricio says much about Roma's disciplined, defensive performance. Roma's only wobble came in a ten-minute period of intense Feyenoord pressure just after half-time when the Dutch side hit the woodwork twice and had two other good chances saved by the in-form Roma goalkeeper.

In the end, Feyenoord could not break down Roma. When Romanian referee Kovacs blew the final whistle, the Roma bench swamped Mourinho as he ran onto the pitch gesticulating wildly and indicating the number five with his outstretched hand. This was his fifth European trophy (Champions Leagues with Porto and Inter, a UEFA Cup with Porto and a Europa League with Manchester United).

It remains to be seen what "Mou" will do next. In tears, he told Italian TV that the Roma fans were "incredible" and that he wanted to talk to club owner, US billionaire Dan Friedkin, about the future, adding: "Before the game, I told my players...to write a page in club history...and we wrote that page".

Maybe he has a few more pages still to write.

Paddy Agnew

Gutted...Feyenoord centre-back Marcos Senesi consoles team-mate Luis Sinisterra

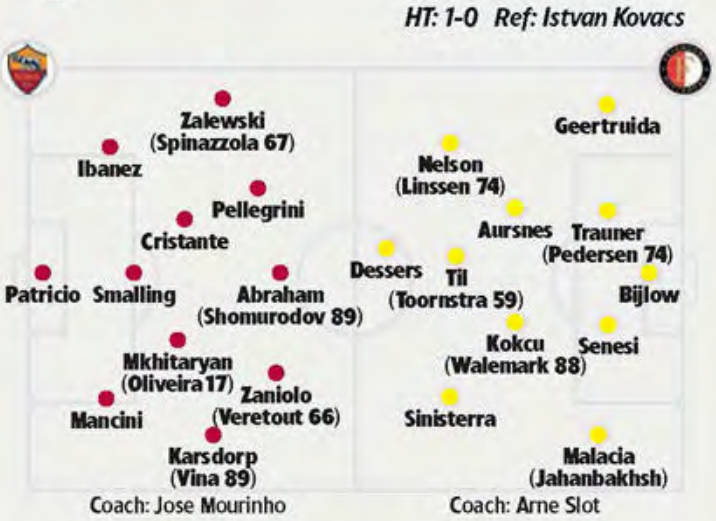
High-five...Mourinho marks his fifth European triumph with the inaugural Conference League

2022 EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE FINAL

May 25 – Arena Kombetare, Tirana

ROMA (Zaniolo 32)	1
FEYENOORD	0

HT: 1-0 Ref: Istvan Kovacs



WHAT THEY SAID

JOSE MOURINHO
(Roma coach)
"Winning is very difficult. You need many ingredients. Our team has played 55 games. We reached the final being tired, but we kept it hidden. This is a fantastic group of players; that makes me emotional. We struggled in the second half; our opponents played well and they forced us to make defensive changes."

TAMMY ABRAHAM
(Roma striker)
"I said when I came here that I'm going to help my team get to the final and one day I want to win a trophy. In my first season, I've achieved that. Credit to my team-mates for excellent performances. We've deserved it; we worked hard all year."

CHRIS SMALLING
(Roma defender)
"We knew how much it would mean to everyone in Rome and you can see how together we are until the end. We dropped a bit deeper than we needed to, but you could see strikers running back – everyone knew we had to win."

ARNE SLOT
(Feyenoord coach)

"I told the players during the break what they had to do better. In the second half, we were sharp from the first moment, but you need a bit of luck and we didn't get it. We had the time and opportunity to score and we didn't. Maybe that's to do with the quality of the opponent."

JUSTIN BIJLOW
(Feyenoord goalkeeper)
"The first half, we didn't put them under as much pressure as we did in the second. We played the ball round at the back, and that suits them. In the second half, we had more possession and opportunities. It's a pity we didn't start this way."

City edge out Liverpool again

For the second time in four years, Manchester City pip Jurgen Klopp's side to the title by a single point on the final day

There were 84 minutes on the clock and Mohamed Salah had just put Liverpool 2-1 up against Wolverhampton Wanderers, when an extra wave of celebration began to spread around Anfield. Aston Villa, it was said, had just equalised against Manchester City to make it 3-3, and Liverpool fans had the Premier League trophy in their sights.

Except, they didn't. Whether it was a false rumour or a misunderstanding that had gotten out of hand, the dream of Manchester City conceding again to hand the Reds the title was just that, a fantasy.

In reality, Pep Guardiola's side were still riding the wave of momentum that had seen them score three goals in a crazy five-minute spell – two from substitute Ilkay Gundogan either side of a cool Rodri finish – and were very much in the ascendency. City had waivered, but the trophy was now firmly back in their grasp, and they weren't about to let it go.

It seems fitting that ten years on from Manchester City's first Premier League title, sealed in the most dramatic manner possible thanks to Sergio Aguero's late goal against Queens Park Rangers, they should deliver the most dramatic final day since then.

If their intention was to try to recreate that level of excitement, they certainly went about it the right way. Whether it was the pressure of the occasion, complacency or sheer fatigue, City were not themselves for 75 minutes. Captain Fernandinho, in his last-ever game for the club, was given a torrid afternoon at centre-back, Bernardo Silva and Riyad Mahrez failed to offer their usual invention, while Gabriel Jesus missed a chance inside the six-yard box that would have convinced many City supporters it wasn't their day.

When Philippe Coutinho put Villa 2-0 up on 69 minutes, it seemed that the script had been written: Liverpool legend and Aston Villa manager Steven Gerrard would help his old club to the title, with the assistance of his former Anfield team-mate.

But after substitute Gundogan had headed in Raheem Sterling's cross to get them back in the game, City looked well on track to claim their fourth title in five years.

False alarm... Mohamed Salah thought he had put Liverpool on course for the title

Meanwhile, over at Anfield, Liverpool were giving their own demonstration of nervous under-performance, followed by ruthless efficiency and incredible strength in depth. Trailing 1-0 inside three minutes, Mohamed Salah's goal off the bench helped secure a 3-1 win, taking Liverpool to 92 points, the ninth-highest tally in Premier League history. Yet just like 2018-19 when they collected 97, it was one short of City.

Jurgen Klopp's side had done well enough to go so close, winning 16 of

THE BREAKDOWN

TEAM OF THE SEASON

CUP FINAL
For only the second time in history, the League Cup and FA Cup finals were both contested by the same teams, **Liverpool** and Chelsea. Even more remarkably, the two matches produced identical results, with Jurgen Klopp's side winning on penalties after 0-0 draws.

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS
Tottenham edged out rivals **Arsenal** to join **Manchester City**, **Liverpool** and **Chelsea** in the Champions League, while **Manchester United** held off **West Ham** to reach the Europa League along with the Gunners. The Hammers instead go into the Conference League.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED TEAMS
Norwich City and **Watford** went straight back down with a whimper, while **Burnley** ended their six-year stay in the top flight. **Fulham** bounced straight back up as Championship winners, joined by **Bournemouth** and play-off winners **Nottingham Forest**.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
Mohamed Salah may have topped both the goal and assist charts, but **Kevin De Bruyne**'s performances got his team over the line. The highest-scoring season of his career, including four goals against Wolves, the Belgian's assist for Gundogan's winner on the final day was typically precise.

Super sub... Ilkay Gundogan's brace secured the title for City

their last 18 matches to take it all the way down to the wire. The two games they dropped points in included the 2-2 draw against City that ultimately proved decisive.

It was a thrilling encounter in which both sides demonstrated their world-class credentials. Yet while the scores remained level, City were – just about – the better side, largely controlling proceedings alongside a couple of defensive slip-ups.

The two clubs remain far ahead of the rest of the league – and indeed most of Europe, too – and look set to lock horns at the top of the pile again next year. May's final-day drama was simply the latest chapter in the tale of a thrilling rivalry that should continue for as long the two managers remain.

The two clubs remain far ahead of the rest of the league – and indeed most of Europe, too

The title race was not the only area of excitement on the final day though, as only two matches had nothing riding on them.

Tottenham's 5-0 dispatching of rock-bottom Norwich meant fourth place was quickly wrapped up, while West Ham's failure to beat Brighton ensured that Manchester United were let off the hook in the race for sixth, but the relegation battle had one more twist as Leeds pipped Burnley to safety.

The financial implications of relegation for Everton, Leeds and Burnley, the three sides scrapping for survival in the final week of the campaign, meant that the stakes were particularly high.

Everton have an expensively-assembled squad and a new stadium to complete, hence why the supporters were so relieved to secure safety in the penultimate game of the season, while Leeds' majority shareholder Andrea Radrizzani is reportedly looking to sell up this summer – a process that would have been significantly complicated by relegation.

Burnley were themselves the subjects of a leveraged buyout at the end of 2020, and a significant chunk of the £65 million loan that was used to purchase the club will now need to be paid back, which will account for the majority of next season's parachute payments.

The Clarets have nine players out of contract, including two-cap England centre-back James Tarkowski, while of their other most saleable assets, Maxwel Cornet has a £17.5m release clause, goalkeeper Nick Pope is out of contract next summer and has World Cup ambitions to consider, as does Dutch striker Wout Weghorst. Perhaps only with the sale of Dwight McNeil can the Clarets both manage their debts and rebuild their squad.

The perilous finances of clubs near the bottom is a stark reminder that while the billions that have been poured in at the top might have produced a thrilling title race, there is a definite cost further down as the rest try to keep up.

Midfield maestro...Kevin De Bruyne holds the Premier League trophy while saluting the fans

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON

The January signing of electric winger **Luis Diaz** allowed Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp to regularly rotate his front line, ensuring that the Reds collected 44 points out of the last 48 available, with the Colombian contributing to seven league goals.

COACH OF THE SEASON

Working with the lowest wage bill in the league, **Thomas Frank** deserves huge credit for guiding Brentford to 13th in their first-ever Premier League season. The Bees rarely looked in trouble, particularly after the arrival of Frank's fellow Dane Christian Eriksen.

Top job... Brentford boss Thomas Frank

Real Madrid secure 35th La Liga title

Karim Benzema inspires *Los Blancos* to a record-extending 35th league crown

"Karim, Ballon d'Or", were the chants from the Real Madrid supporters inside the Santiago Bernabeu, with the striker applauding in response. He'd just scored what would turn out to be the winner against Athletic Bilbao to put his side seven points clear at the top of La Liga.

The date was December 1, 2021; two days earlier Lionel Messi had been awarded his seventh Ballon d'Or, and the chants weren't a celebration but an act of defiance. A protest against a result they deemed unjust. The France forward had just been involved in his 19th goal from his 14th league game of the season. In the eyes of the fans, the best footballer on the planet was standing in front of them.

Lethal...Karim Benzema and Vinicius Junior assisted each other for 11 goals combined

Real Madrid, looking to make up for their trophyless 2020-21 season under the (somewhat) new leadership of Carlo Ancelotti, were already steamrolling their way towards the title by the winter break.

The Italian manager, who guided the club to their tenth Champions League – the elusive "*La Decima*" – in 2014, had agreed to a second spell after Zinedine Zidane resigned in May, although the former Everton coach wasn't Madrid president Florentino Perez's first choice. In fact, he probably wasn't even his second, third or fourth, not that the businessman would likely admit to that anymore.

Expectations at the start of the season were to challenge for the league title and, other than matchday three, Ancelotti's side remained top of the table throughout the entire campaign.

After the final-day drama of 2020-21, this season's La Liga title race has been comparatively tame. That's not to say it's been boring. There have been moments when Real Madrid fans were made to shudder; losing to Espanyol in week eight, Getafe in week 19, drawing with relegation strugglers Elche in week 21, and suffering that humiliating 4-0 home defeat to Barcelona in week 29.

Yet each of those setbacks produced a response. After the Espanyol defeat they won 2-1 at the Nou Camp in their very next league game; they went more than two months unbeaten after the Getafe defeat, and after the Barcelona thrashing they won every game in April. Every time the door was slightly opened for their rivals to pursue them, it was quickly slammed shut again.

Bumps...Carlo Ancelotti is thrown into the air by his players

Some critics suggest Real Madrid played too deep, over-relied on Benzema or simply benefitted from their flailing title rivals' inconsistency. Indeed, the stats do reveal a team lining up two-and-a-half metres deeper than last season. But Real also made more passes per sequence than any team in La Liga, took the most shots and scored the most goals.

THE BREAKDOWN

TEAM OF THE SEASON

CUP FINAL

In only the second Copa del Rey final not involving Barcelona or Real Madrid since 2010, **Real Betis** beat Valencia in a penalty shootout in Seville. It marked *Los Beticos'* first Copa del Rey victory since 2005 and only the fourth major trophy in the club's history.

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS

Barcelona, **Sevilla** and **Atletico Madrid** clinched the other three Champions League spots, with **Betis** and **Real Sociedad** qualifying for the Europa League. Champions League semi-finalists **Villarreal** earned a spot in the Europa Conference League.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED TEAMS

All three of 2020-21's newly-promoted teams managed to survive relegation, with **Alaves**, **Levante** and **Granada** dropping down a division. **Real Valladolid** make an immediate return to La Liga in 2022-23, alongside **Almeria**, with the play-off winners still to be decided.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON

Who else? Pichichi winner **Karim Benzema** recorded a new personal best for goals scored in a single season. He also became the fifth player to net over 40 goals in one campaign for Real Madrid after Alfredo Di Stefano, Ferenc Puskas, Hugo Sanchez and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Real Madrid were already steamrolling their way towards the title by the winter break

Ancelotti, the ultimate pragmatist, at times asked his side to absorb pressure and counter, but they could also keep possession for long periods of games, and they often played on the front foot. They adapted their style to different moments and opponents.

It's also a case of Ancelotti adapting to his squad. His preferred midfield three of Toni Kroos, Luka Modric and Casemiro are 32, 36 and 30 respectively. Their slightly deeper starting positions took some of the physical strain off their ageing legs and offered more protection to a completely new-look central defensive pairing of David Alaba and Eder Militao, while the pace of Vinicius Junior, Rodrygo and Marco Asensio were effective counter-attacking weapons.

"Vini", in particular, had an absolutely outstanding campaign and rivals keeper Thibaut Courtois as Madrid's prize for the Best Player Not-Named Benzema. He scored and assisted twice as many goals as in the past three seasons combined, showing far more composure with his final ball.

His partnership with Benzema has been lethal, with the pair assisting each other for 11 league goals this season. Despite his goalscoring figures, the France striker can still drop deep to create space for his team-mate – just as he used to do for Cristiano Ronaldo.

Barcelona fans will grumble that the season was decided before a ball had even been kicked. The departure of Lionel Messi was clearly a blow, albeit expected, while they felt short-changed in the Antoine Griezmann-Luuk de Jong deadline-day swap deal. Ronald Koeman was sacked in late October after an awful start, with Xavi picking up the pieces thereafter.

Atletico Madrid, meanwhile, have suffered something of an identity crisis. Diego Simeone, changing tactics and line-ups on an almost weekly basis, was unable to extract the competitive edge from his players that won them the title in 2020-21 and that his squad have become so well known for. Their inconsistency has even led to some fans questioning whether it's the end of the road for the Argentinian.

Julen Lopetegui's Sevilla were the only side able to offer something of a title challenge, until a run of just two wins in ten La Liga games put them back into a battle for the top four.

Real Madrid's triumph capped a remarkable milestone for Ancelotti, as the Italian became the first manager to win titles in each of Europe's top five leagues – England, Spain, Germany, Italy and France.

It was also a record-breaking season for Marcelo, who won his 24th piece of silverware with Real Madrid. The Brazilian defender overtook Paco Gento as the player with the most trophy wins in the club's 120-year history.

Poetically, though, the final goal of the 4-0 victory over Espanyol, which wrapped up Madrid's earliest title in 32 years, came from that combination of Vinicius and Benzema. "Karim, Ballon d'Or" seems like a reasonable proposition come October 17, 2022.

Boss...Carlo Ancelotti made history in 2021-22

COACH OF THE SEASON
Kudos to Unai Emery for his efforts in the Champions League, but **Carlo Ancelotti** is La Liga's Coach of the Season. At 62 years old, he became the oldest man to lift the Spanish league trophy and the first manager to reach five Champions League finals.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Following in Pedri's footsteps, **Gavi** has gone from an exciting youth prospect to a regular Spain international in the space of a year. He made over 30 La Liga appearances for Barcelona in 2021-22 and incredibly still ended the season as a 17-year-old.

Starlet...Gavi has impressed this season

Milan are back

Stefano Pioli's side announce their return to centre stage by pipping neighbours Internazionale to top spot in Serie A

After a decade in the wilderness, Milan are back. When they beat Sassuolo 3-0 on the very last day of the season on May 22, the club was winning its 19th league title, its first since 2011. The scenes of wild, all night celebrations by Milan fans that greeted their title win say something about the sense of relief.

Significantly, for the second time in two seasons, "foreign" ownership has triumphed in Serie A. Last year, it was the Chinese electronics giant Suning, owners of city cousins Internazionale, who lifted the title. This year, it was the turn of US investment giant, Elliott Management, who have owned Milan since July 2018.

After a decade that saw Juventus win nine straight titles, the pendulum would seem to have swung from Turin to the country's business capital, Milan. Not only did the title stay in Milan, but it did so after a ding-dong, season-long battle, largely dominated by the two Milanese city cousins.

In the end, Milan finished two points clear of Inter, with Napoli seven points behind in third and with Old Lady Juventus "languishing" in fourth, 17 points behind and, for once, without a single competition won all season long. Even if many critics claimed, indeed still claim, that Inter were the strongest team in the land this season, the reality is that Milan were good value for their title.

Second best...Internazionale's Lautaro Martinez after his side failed to defend the Serie A title

The Milan "package" contains many of the key elements in a successful side: a skilled, experienced coach in Stefano Pioli, a charismatic club director in Paolo Maldini, an inspirational player-mentor in Zlatan Ibrahimovic and some outstanding talent in the shape of French goalkeeper Mike Maignan, English centre-back Fikayo Tomori, French left-back Theo Hernandez, Italy midfielder Sandro Tonali and, above all, Portuguese winger Rafael Leao.

Perhaps the turning point in Milan's season came last February, on the night of the second Milan derby. At half-time, then-league leaders Inter were 1-0 up, seven points clear of Milan, dominating the game and seemingly already on their way to retaining the title.

However, that derby was turned on its head by another Milan hero, veteran French striker Olivier Giroud, who in the space of three minutes (75th to 78th) scored twice to set up Milan for a hugely significant 2-1 win. Within a week, a rattled Inter had been knocked off the top of the table by Milan. On top of that, Milan now knew that if they were to end up on equal points with Inter, the head-to-head count would be in their favour since the first seasonal derby last November had ended 1-1. As the title race more and more developed into a two-way Milanese tussle, that head-to-head count became an important psychological advantage for Milan.

Mastermind... Milan boss Stefano Pioli stands tall above his players after sealing the title

The next, equally critical turning point came on April 27, four matchdays from the end of the season, when Inter met Bologna in a rescheduled fixture, originally set for January but postponed because of COVID. Critics and supporters had long pointed to this "game in hand" as the moment when Inter (two points behind Milan for most of April) would pull off the "*sorpasso*", the overtaking of Milan.

Alas for Inter, it was not to be as they

THE BREAKDOWN

TEAM OF THE SEASON

CUP FINAL
Internazionale won their eighth Coppa Italia at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome, beating Juventus 4-2 in a thrilling game of wildly changing fortunes. Inter's in-form Croatian winger Ivan Perisic wrapped it up with two brilliant goals in extra-time.

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS
No surprises with **Milan**, **Inter**, **Napoli** and **Juventus** in the Champions League, **Lazio** and **Roma** in the Europa League and **Fiorentina**, back in Europe for the first time in six seasons, in the Europa Conference League.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED TEAMS
Cagliari, **Genoa** and **Venezia** crash down to Serie B after a tight relegation battle that saw Salernitana stay up (thanks in part to 39-year-old Franck Ribery), despite having been bottom for most of the season. **Lecce** and **Cremonese** return to the top flight along with **Monza.**

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
Rafael Leao culminated three years of constant growth by scoring or setting up eight crucial goals in the final six games, bringing his seasonal tally to 11 goals and eight assists. His pace and ability to beat defenders on the left wing mean that he really is a player who can make a difference.

lost 2-1, beaten in a game they had appeared to dominate but in which a late blunder of *Monty Python* proportions by reserve goalkeeper Ionut Radu proved decisive.

Inter had played their trump card and lost. From that point on, Milan were masters of their own destiny, showing real determination and self-belief to win their final four games against Fiorentina, Verona, Atalanta and Sassuolo.

In contrast to the great Milan sides of the late 1980s and early '90s, this is a young, relatively inexperienced team (Tonali, Brahim Diaz, Pierre Kalulu and Alexis Saelemaekers are all 22, Leao is 23, while Hernandez and Tomori are 24). Furthermore, "guiding light" Ibrahimovic (40 last October and injured for much of the spring) is probably out of the playing equation going forward.

After a decade that saw Juventus win nine straight Serie A titles, the pendulum would seem to have swung from Turin to the country's business capital, Milan

However, with Maldini and Pioli now seemingly untouchable with the club having attracted the interest of US private investment firm RedBird Capital, and with young players like Tonali, Tomori, Hernandez and Leao all launched on important careers, the Milan future currently looks extremely bright. Pioli and Maldini have set it all up, starting with the recruitment of then 38-year-old Ibrahimovic back in 2019. There could be much more to come.

Player of the Year...Milan's Rafael Leao

COACH OF THE SEASON
For much of the last decade, **Stefano Pioli** has been the coach you call in when the clubhouse is burning down. At Lazio, Inter and Fiorentina, however, he always looked like more than a stopgap solution. His masterful handling of Milan has proved the point.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Brought into the Roma senior team at the beginning of March, 20-year-old left-sided attacker **Nicola Zalewski** looks the real deal. Ten years a Roma youth player (he was born in Italy to Polish parents), Zalewski has explosive pace and a terrific work rate.

Coppa Italia winners ...Inter coach Simone Inzaghi with the trophy

Ten in a row for Bayern

Yet the Bavarians' dominance calls the rest of the league's quality into question

As relentless and voracious as ever, Bayern Munich recorded their tenth straight Bundesliga title, an achievement which, according to one's viewpoint, can either be attributed to the Bavarian behemoth's vastly superior finances and squad, or the distinct lack of strength in depth in the German top flight.

In the 59th running of the Bundesliga marathon, the Bayern fraternity had plenty to celebrate. A glorious autumn in which the Reds struck a record 56 goals in the opening 17 fixtures; the team's infallibility in big games, picking up 16 out of 18 points in their clashes with top-four rivals (in descending order, Dortmund, Leverkusen and RB Leipzig) and the goalscoring feats of star striker Robert Lewandowski, whose 35 Bundesliga goals propelled him to his fifth consecutive marksman of the year award, his seventh in total.

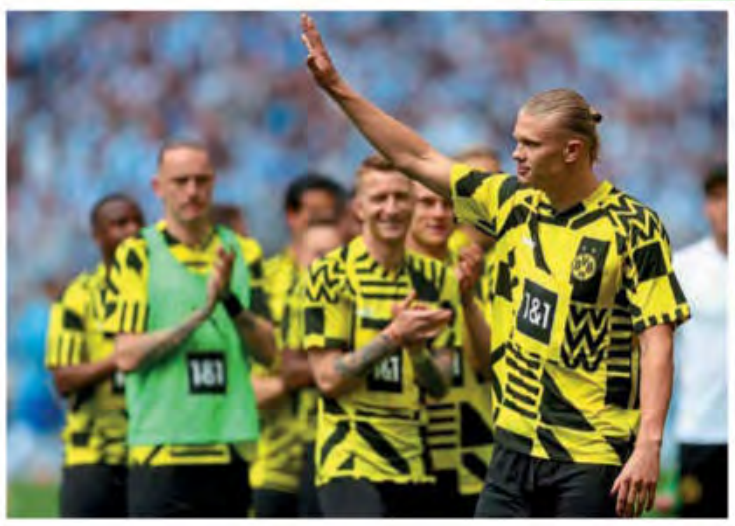
Bayern boss Julian Nagelsmann, at the Allianz-Arena helm for just ten months, described the first major title of his coaching career as "very special". Yet even he would have to admit that in the grand scheme of things, he and his side had come up somewhat short.

Bundesliga success alone is not enough for the Bayern masters. This is a club defined in across-the-board terms and in other competitions, the Reds singularly failed, surprisingly beaten by Villarreal at the quarter-final stage of the Champions League and hammered 5-0 by Borussia Monchengladbach in the second round of the German Cup. At Bayern they love to win trophies in clusters. That was not the case this term.

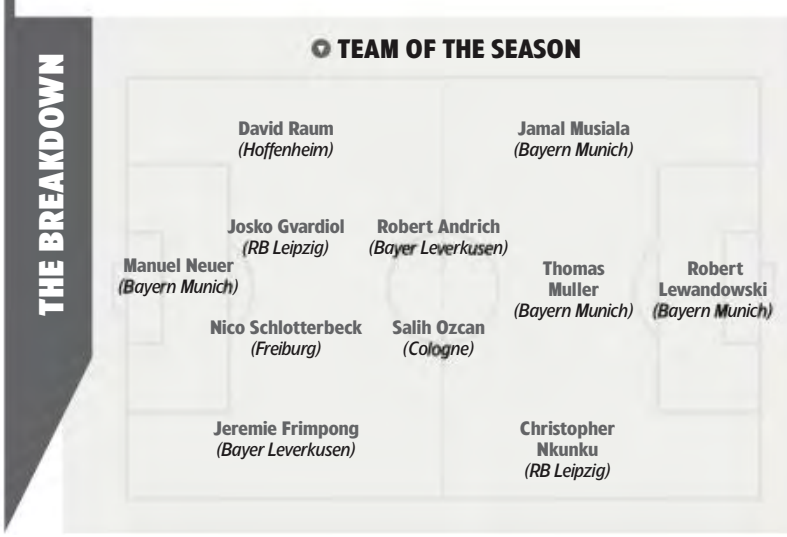
All in all, it was a season of contentious issues at Bayern. Joshua Kimmich prevaricating over his COVID-19 vaccine and only relenting after contracting the virus and suffering a lung complaint. Several other Bayern players, including German internationals Serge Gnabry and Jamal Musiala, having their wages docked for testing positive while unvaccinated. Bayern fans angrily attacking the Bayern brass over the club's commercial links with Qatar, citing the Gulf State's poor human rights record. Centre-back Niklas Sule controversially announcing a Bosman free move to arch-foes Dortmund in mid-season.

For all their dominance on the home front, Nagelsmann's Bayern are anything but the finished article. Nagelsmann will not need reminding of his team's problem areas: the over-reliance on Lewandowski, the red flags in central defence, where neither new boy Dayot Upamecano or Lucas Hernandez have been consistently solid, and the physicality deficit in central midfield. Joshua Kimmich, a key figure in this department, may be an excellent playmaker, but does not have the power or discipline to guard the back four.

It has to be a major concern for



City-bound... Haaland waves goodbye to the Dortmund fans



CUP FINAL
Ten-man **RB Leipzig** staged a remarkable comeback to beat Freiburg in the DFB-Pokal Cup showpiece, coming from behind to draw 1-1 in regulation time, bravely holding firm in the extra half-hour, then prevailing 4-2 in the penalty shootout.

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS
Bayern, **Dortmund**, **Leverkusen**, **RB Leipzig** plus Europa League victors **Eintracht Frankfurt** go into the Champions League. **Union Berlin** and **Freiburg** have a Europa League date, while **Cologne** will take part in the Europa Conference League play-offs.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED TEAMS
Greuther Furth and **Arminia Bielefeld** exit the top-flight, with their places going to second division top-two, **Schalke** and **Werder Bremen**. Hertha Berlin (16th in the Bundesliga) edged out Hamburg (third in the second division) in the relegation/promotion play-off.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
Poland hitman **Robert Lewandowski** once again proved irresistible in front of goal. After eight seasons, he says he wants to leave the Allianz Arena. Will the Bayern board dig their heels in and force him to respect his contract, which expires next year?

Ten in a row... Bayern players celebrate during the title-clinching victory against Borussia Dortmund

the Bundesliga that Bayern were put under so little pressure in 2021-22, that the chasing pack all had their glaring fault-lines. In marked contrast to Dortmund's potency as an attacking force – most of it generated by the Manchester City-bound striker Erling Haaland – their defensive work was often slipshod (hence the pursuit of Sule). Leverkusen, another team equally capable of offensive fireworks as rear-guard gaffes, were much more effective on their travels. As for the Leipziger, they only came to life in early December when coach Jesse Marsch was sacked and replaced by the more tactically aware Domenico Tedesco.

Full marks to former Schalke boss Tedesco for spectacularly turning it around in Leipzig, transforming an under-performing mid-table side into vibrant and well-organised Champions League qualifiers. With 36 points from 17 games, RB were very much the form team of the post-New Year period.

Union Berlin and Freiburg provided the feel-good stories of the campaign, making light of scant liquidity to secure tickets for next season's Europa League. That fifth-placed Union – who in 2006 were playing in the fourth tier of the German pyramid – were just two points shy of a Champions League spot emphatically says that anyone can dare to dream. Union's ace cards? The clever man-management of Swiss coach Urs Fischer, their defensive stability and 15-goal Nigerian striker Taiwo Awoniyi.

> At Bayern they love to win trophies in clusters. That was not the case this term

Another surprise package were Cologne who, after emerging unscathed from a relegation play-off last term, bounced back with a vengeance, finishing seventh to claim a Europa Conference League spot. A thoroughly-deserved recompense for a team worth much more than the sum of its parts.

Pity the same could not be said of Borussia Monchengladbach, Wolfsburg and Eintracht Frankfurt, who despite above-average rosters, made little Bundesliga headway. The latter, of course, made up for it with victory in the Europa League.

The automatically-relegated pair of Greuther Furth and Arminia Bielefeld had two distinct sob stories. Furth were already on the rocks after starting the season with a 14-game winless streak. Bielefeld simply drew too many games, a league high this term of 13.

Irresistible...Robert Lewandowski

COACH OF THE SEASON
In today's Bundesliga, there is no better motivator than **Steffen Baumgart**. Sporting his trademark grey cap, the charismatic ex-Hansa Rostock striker has worked wonders in his first season at Cologne, preaching intensity, togetherness and a no-frills approach.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Josko Gvardiol hit the ground running after joining RB Leipzig for €18 million from Dinamo Zagreb in July of last year. Word has it that the highly-rated Croatian centre-back, 20, now has a market value of almost €30m.

Top newcomer... Josko Gvardiol

Joyless PSG return to the top of Ligue 1

Champions League failings and Kylian Mbappe's contract overshadow domestic league title for the Parisian giants

Despair and jubilation were oddly inverted at the top of Ligue 1 this season. For champions Paris Saint-Germain, their tenth title (a joint record), underwhelmed. Dreams of Lionel Messi combining with Kylian Mbappe and Neymar to produce flowing, continent-beating football were never realised, while PSG's latest Champions League capitulation to a 16-minute Karim Benzema hat-trick in Madrid defined their year.

Often fortunate to snatch more points than they deserved, PSG never truly convinced domestically and were carried by Mbappe who became the first player to top both the goal (28) and assist (17) charts in Ligue 1. It was Mbappe's strongest season to date. Aside from his prolific numbers, the 23-year-old played with unerring consistency and authority, and was usually comfortably the standout player in any PSG game, despite the illustrious company.

PSG's most meaningful triumph came as Mbappe surprisingly agreed a new three-year contract after a season of speculation over his future, having asked to leave for Real Madrid last summer. Sweeping hierarchical changes are expected to follow, with Mbappe likely to wield considerable power within the club. Sporting director Leonardo has already been replaced by famed transfer whisperer Luis Campos, and head coach Mauricio Pochettino could soon exit too.

Behind PSG, however, the season was a high-octane, joyous and competitive thriller. Everything bar the title was decided on the final day. There were wild celebrations at the Velodrome as Marseille took second – and with it, qualification for the Champions League group stage – thanks to a 96th-minute equaliser for Lens against rivals Monaco, after OM had both seemingly secured and thrown away the runners-up spot in the preceding weeks. Jorge Sampaoli's constantly evolving methods don't always coalesce but his nuanced, finely balanced set-ups make Marseille a slippery, yet surprisingly stoic, proposition. A jumping Velodrome will be a tricky European away trip next season.

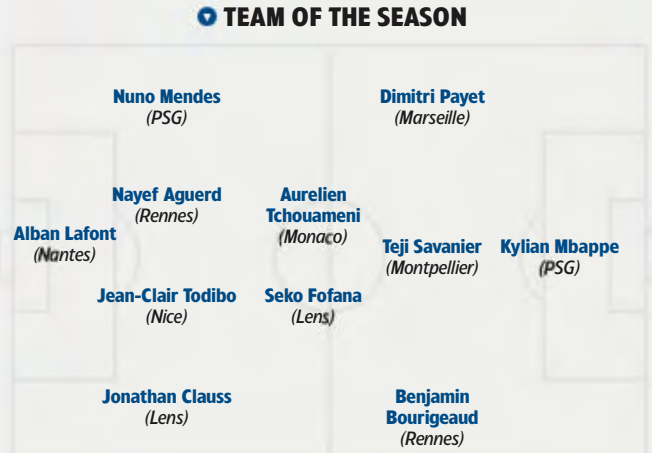
Final-day drama... Lens forward Ignatius Ganago celebrates scoring against Monaco

Despite the seemingly self-defeating sacking of Niko Kovac mid-season, Monaco eventually found the right formula under former Club Brugge boss Philippe Clement and rallied to win nine consecutive games which had them second before the final day. Although midfield orchestrator Aurelien Tchouameni will leave this summer, Monaco will be a major threat once more next season under Clement – if they can make the right moves in the window.

Fourth-placed Rennes were unfortunate to miss out on the podium having been Ligue 1's leading entertainers throughout the season. Their pacy, fluid style saw Bruno Genesio named Coach of the Year by the player's union, and created a number of stars in the process, such as balletic midfield creator Lovro

THE BREAKDOWN

TEAM OF THE SEASON



CUP FINAL
As was common this season, Nice were stumped by a well-organised defence in a tense final against **Nantes** who took a battling 1-0 win via a Ludovic Blas penalty – the club's first trophy since the 2001 Ligue 1 title and a monumental achievement given their resources.

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS
PSG and **Marseille** make the Champions League group stage, **Monaco** will contest the qualifiers while cup winners **Nantes** and **Rennes** will play Europa League football. **Nice** will be a very competitive Europa Conference League side.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED TEAMS
Metz join **Bordeaux** in Ligue 2 despite a late surge, while **Toulouse** return as second-tier champions after two years away, with **Ajaccio** following in second. **Auxerre** returned to the top flight after beating **Saint-Etienne** in the play-offs.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
Carrying PSG, this was the year **Kylian Mbappe** truly ascended to the very highest level. His maturity, effortless quality and the fact that he always seems to have an extra gear saw him end the season as the world's leading player.

Majer and the David Beckham-esque Benjamin Bourigeaud. Keeping a team of such overt individual quality together will be tricky, however.

Nice, who were deducted a point along with Lyon due to crowd trouble, finished level on points with Rennes despite scoring 30 fewer goals (and conceding just four less) and were fortunate to do so as Andy Delort's final day hat-trick overturned a 2-0 deficit at Reims to pinch European football. However, last season's title-winning coach, Christophe Galtier, struggled with balance all season and his team faded badly after Christmas having been favourites for second at one stage.

PSG's most meaningful triumph came as Mbappe surprisingly agreed a new three-year contract after a season of speculation over his future

Although they ended with little reward, European charges from Strasbourg and Lens amounted to the season's most impressive feats. Led by two of Europe's brightest young coaches in Julien Stephan and Franck Haise respectively, both clubs were within reach of Europe on the final day and outperformed title-holders Lille and a stacked Lyon squad. Both managers overtly improved seemingly workmanlike groups of players, many of whom will be widely coveted this summer – particularly Lens midfielder Seko Fofana.

Staying put... Ligue 1 Player of the Year Kylian Mbappe salutes the Paris Saint-Germain fans after agreeing a new contract

At the bottom, having narrowly escaped the drop last season, Bordeaux's slow but inexorable implosion saw the 2009 champions finish bottom and in complete chaos. Switzerland's Euro 2020 coaching hero Vladimir Petkovic was sacked in February but the famously pragmatic David Guion, who took Reims from Ligue 2 to Europe, couldn't instil the same organisation and rigour as 91 goals were conceded in their 38 games. A slew of below-par signings proved a major barrier to survival.

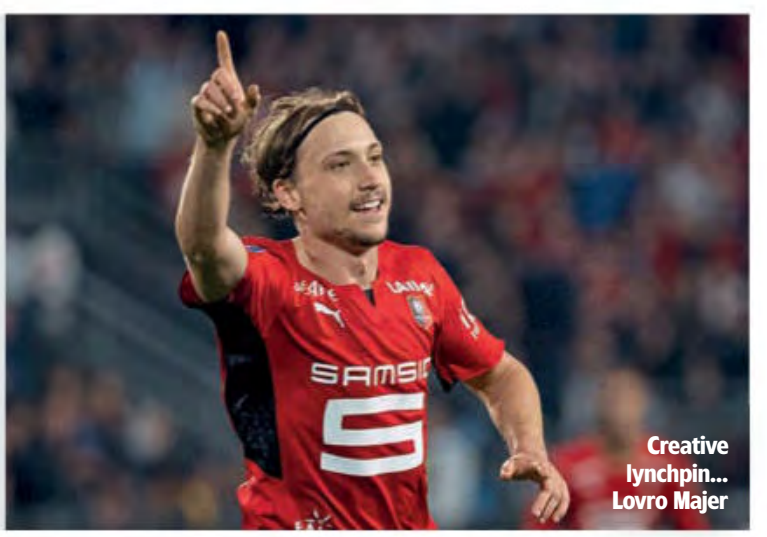
Former Arsenal defender Laurent Koscielny was banished with no warning in January and eventually saw his contract terminated, something he called "a right slap in the face." Even without relegation, Bordeaux's finances were already concerning after making the fourth-biggest loss (€67m) of any club in 2020-21, and reports now suggest owner Gerard Lopez will need to find a considerable sum to prevent a slide down the pyramid this summer. Even if Lopez can stabilise the club, with Ligue 1 soon dropping to 18 teams, finding a way back up will be a major challenge with large chunks of the squad set to depart.

As always, the extent of the summer talent exodus will colour much of next season. With premier centre-back William Saliba's loan at Marseille ending and others moving on, Sampaoli will need an entirely new defence. No European football will make it difficult for Lyon to account for the likely departures of Lucas Paqueta, Houssem Aouar and others. Nice have the resources to hold on to their best players but Galtier, stubbornly sticking to his title-winning 4-4-2, has more work to do than most stylistically. Meanwhile, however, although a major political win for French football and PSG, Mbappe's new deal should ensure Parisian dominance for some time to come.

Standout star...Mbappe collects the Ligue 1 Player of the Year award for the third consecutive time

COACH OF THE SEASON
Nantes were expected to fight relegation but, having rescued the club from the drop via the play-offs last season, veteran coach **Antoine Kombouare** turned the same group of players into cup winners and European challengers. Few in Europe did so much with so little.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Having matched PSG for spending last summer, **Lovro Majer** was the least heralded of Rennes' signings but the graceful Croatian, who more than resembles Luka Modric, became the club's creative lynchpin and was close to unplayable at his best.



Creative lynchpin... Lovro Majer

Ajax stumble over the finish line

Amsterdam club make it three titles in a row, but with large thanks to some controversial decisions

Ajax clinching the title means that the pre-season predictions came true. However, the manner in which they did it was far from comprehensive.

Winning the league – for the 36th time – is always a joy, but this title was hardly convincing. Still, Manchester United-bound Erik ten Hag was able to say goodbye with his third consecutive title, but there were some controversial moments to overcome before eventually getting his hands on the trophy.

Basically, Ajax's season was a tale of two stories. Before the winter break they were on track for every piece of silverware available to them; soon afterwards, however, their cup hopes had been ended and they struggled to reach the finish line in the league.

After some dazzling football and impressive results in the Champions League group phase, nobody would have thought the Amsterdam club would get in trouble domestically.

Yet it all began to crumble after a series of incidents. First, there was the sacking of director Marc Overmars for sending inappropriate messages to female colleagues – a huge blow for Erik ten Hag, who was missing a key partner in the architect of the club's recent success.

A surprise knock out by Benfica in the Champions League was also a big disappointment. And behind the scenes protagonists were already thinking about jumping ship. Nicolas Tagliafico's Barcelona transfer fell through, which left the Argentinian frustrated, while Noussair Mazraoui refused to extend his contract and has now joined Bayern Munich. There is uncertainty over Ryan Gravenberch's future too, with his current deal expiring in 2023. And then there was Internazionale-bound Andre Onana, who became persona non grata for his ungrateful behaviour towards club and fans. The fact that the Cameroonian returned between the sticks was only because his two replacements were among the many injured players the Amsterdam club had.

The heat was on. They lost the cup final to PSV despite going in front. More than once they were saved by the bell with narrow or last-minute wins against minnows, but the most controversial matches were yet to come.

First, Ajax clinched a 2-1 victory at closest rivals PSV, with a highly dubious winning goal from Mazraoui. During the attack it looked like the ball had crossed the touchline yet referee and VAR gave the visitors the benefit of the doubt.

Then, three matchdays before the end of the season, came even more drama. The leaders stumbled; with

ABOVE: Three in a row...Ajax players celebrate after winning the club's 36th league title

> It caused furious reaction, with nearly everybody agreeing that the penalty should never have been awarded. Even the Dutch FA agreed, issuing a statement the following day admitting the mistake

The perfect send off...Manchester United-bound manager Erik ten Hag salutes the Ajax supporters

THE BREAKDOWN

TEAM OF THE SEASON

CUP FINAL
Ten years after their last Dutch Cup win, **PSV** clinched the trophy by beating Ajax 2-1. Goals from Mexican Erick Gutierrez and winger Cody Gakpo five minutes after the break were enough to wipe out Ryan Gravenberch's successful first-half effort.

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS
Ajax (Champions League), runners-up **PSV** (Champions League qualifiers), third-place **Feyenoord** (Europa League) and **FC Twente** (Europa Conference League preliminaries) all qualified for Europe. They were joined by **AZ**, who won the European play-offs.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED TEAMS
PEC Zwolle (after ten years) and **Willem II** (after eight) go down and are replaced by Second Division champions **Emmen** (immediate return) and Wim Jonk's **Volendam**. The play-offs saw 16th-placed **Heracles** also relegated, with **Excelsior** taking their place.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
An Olympic champion last summer, **Antony** took the next steps in his development. A speedy, dazzling, tricky winger who causes havoc for opposition defences, he made his senior Brazil debut this term and could move to a massive European club this summer.

75 minutes on the clock, Ajax trailed AZ 2-1, while over in Rotterdam, PSV were 2-0 up against Feyenoord. At that moment, the gap was just one point, but it wouldn't stay that way.

In the 86th minute, Ajax equalised through Edson Alvarez, while Cyriel Dessers pulled one back for Feyenoord.

A few moments later came the crucial moment that would ultimately decide the championship. Referee Serdar Gozubuyuk gave a controversial penalty after Jens Toornstra's shot hit Mauro Junior's arm while the defender was clearly making an attempt to duck away whilst turning around. Dessers stepped up to convert the spot-kick, and the deal was sealed.

It caused furious reaction, especially in Eindhoven, with nearly everybody agreeing that the penalty should never have been awarded. Even the Dutch FA agreed, issuing a statement the following day admitting the mistake.

In their next game, just three days later, Ajax clinched the title with a 5-0 thrashing of Heerenveen, and eventually finished two points clear of PSV.

Their 36th title, the only silverware this season, marks the end of an era. Ajax need fresh blood, and new coach Alfred Schreuder, who was Ten Hag's assistant in 2018 and recently led Club Brugge to the title, faces a heavy task to build up a new team that has to be successful immediately; the spoiled board and fans won't settle for less.

A similar transformation will be required in Eindhoven as Ruud van Nistelrooy takes over from Roger Schmidt. Brought in as a top coach, the Benfica-bound German's reputation proved to be better than his results. A Dutch Super Cup and a national cup in two years (compared to Ten Hag's six trophies in three) isn't enough to take away the image of a wronged coach who often made inexplicable team changes and complained a bit too much about refereeing decisions.

Perhaps Schreuder and Van Nistelrooy could learn a trick or two from Arne Slot, who kissed sleeping giants Feyenoord back to life despite losing Netherlands international Steven Berghuis to arch-rivals Ajax last summer. The Rotterdam club have financial constraints but Slot's down-to-earth approach, smart transfers and tactical awareness steered them all the way to the Europa Conference League final.

Learning from his approach on his debut year at a top club is a valuable lesson for the new faces at Ajax and PSV.

Controversial... PSV's Brazilian full-back Mauro Junior reacts after conceding a penalty against rivals Feyenoord

Player of the Season...Brazilian winger Antony

COACH OF THE SEASON

Arne Slot already had a good track record at AZ, despite being sacked when he announced his move to Feyenoord. Calm, smart and tactically aware, he prefers attacking but realistic football. He led the Rotterdam club to the final of the Europa Conference League.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON

Unlike many of his countrymen, Austria centre-back **Gernot Trauner** has never played in the German Bundesliga, which perhaps explains why he slipped under the radar and is, at 30, a late bloomer. His calm, no-risk approach and work-rate make him vital for Feyenoord.

Mr Reliable... Gernot Trauner

Record-breaking Porto back on top in style

Sergio Conceicao takes his impressive unit to new heights to reclaim the title

Porto's imperious march to the Portuguese championship – the Dragons' third title in five seasons with Sergio Conceicao at the helm – owed much more to the technical excellence, tactical astuteness and front-foot football than the vigour and hard running that had characterised the two previous conquests of the Primeira Liga under their firebrand manager.

Previous incarnations of Conceicao's league-winning sides were personified by the man mountains that were Moussa Marega and Tiquinho Soares up front, and efforts to physically overwhelm their opponents. This time around, the driving force of the team comprised Vitor Ferreira (aka Vitinha) and Otavio, two slender, slivery, clever midfielders whose performances were so consistently outstanding they both forced their way into Portugal's senior team and could well feature in Qatar. Both players stand at just 5ft 8ins tall, yet their football IQ, stealth and tenacity resulted in Porto dictating play in the vast majority of their matches.

Not that this Porto side can be considered a soft touch. No team with the ageless Pepe as its captain can be anything but exuberantly committed, and Colombian enforcer Mateus Uribe also enjoyed a fabulous campaign in central midfield alongside Vitinha.

However, it is the off-the-charts skill levels of Luis Diaz in the first half of the season before his switch to Liverpool, the guile of Fabio Vieira, the light-footed enterprise shown by winger-turned-right-back Joao Mario and the zippy unpredictability of the manager's son Francisco Conceicao, not to mention the stardust sprinkled by the aforementioned Vitinha and Otavio, that most stick in the mind when describing Porto 2021-22.

The case for this being Porto's strongest team in the Conceicao era is borne out by the statistics: 29 victories, four draws and just a single defeat in 34 matches is a remarkable record, even in Portugal's traditionally lopsided championship where the top three are in a different league to the rest. Porto scored the most goals (86), conceded the fewest (22) and broke the record for points earned (91), leaving no doubt about the justice of their triumph.

Runners-up...Sporting coach Ruben Amorim

Champions... Sergio Conceicao leads the Porto celebrations

When asked about whether this was the Porto team that played the most high-quality, easy-on-the-eye football under his charge, Conceicao made a point of emphasising the virtue that unites all his sides: unremitting intensity.

THE BREAKDOWN

TEAM OF THE SEASON

CUP FINAL

The result was never in doubt after prolific Iranian striker Mehdi Taremi put **Porto** ahead midway through the first half with his 25th goal of the season against relegated Tondela, the 3-1 victory clinching the double in the wonderful Jamor stadium.

EUROPEAN QUALIFIERS

Yet again, **Porto** and **Sporting** go directly into the Champions League group stage, while **Benfica** have to qualify to join them. Europa League specialists **Braga** are in the competition again, with **Gil Vicente** and **Vitoria Guimaraes** entering the Europa Conference League.

RELEGATED AND PROMOTED TEAMS

Belenenses were hopelessly outclassed and go down with cup finalists **Tondela**. **Rio Ave** make a swift return to the top flight, and Lisbon minnows **Casa Pia** are back after 83 years away. **Chaves** returned to the Primeira Liga after beating **Moreirense** in the play-offs.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON

Vitinha was one of the few Portuguese imports who did not settle at Wolverhampton Wanderers, but the bright, creative, intelligent midfielder lit up the Portuguese league and was rewarded with his full Portugal debut.

"What is the football that people most like to see? That depends," he replied. "Some people liked watching Barcelona, but that put me to sleep. Others preferred watching the Dortmund side of a few years ago, which were a wonder in terms of constant fast attacking. Whatever the approach, the intensity always has to be there. We as coaching staff are extremely demanding every single day. If a player comes to training and thinks he can do just enough, that's not good enough for us. We work very hard to make sure they all raise their game."

The driving force of the team comprised Vitinha and Otavio, whose performances were so consistently outstanding they both forced their way into Portugal's senior team

The 47-year-old is also demanding of Porto's boardroom, angrily expressing his disgust at the Diaz sale in January and hinting heavily that his decision on whether or not to stick around the Estadio do Dragao will depend on increased investment to enable a more competitive campaign in the Champions League. Should Porto's top brass fail to deliver on that front, with his stock extremely high, it would not be a huge shock to see Conceicao move on, with rumours of a prospective switch to Serie A recurrent.

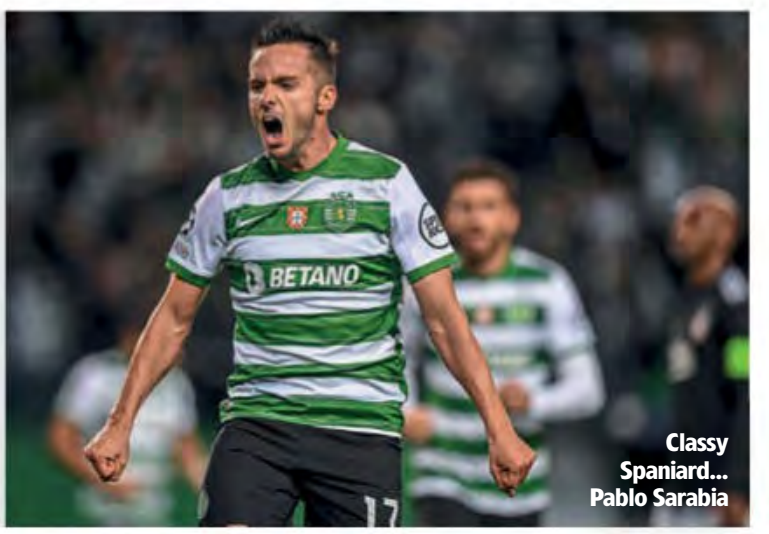
After the euphoria of winning the league for the first time in two decades last year, Sporting's campaign felt anti-climactic. That is harsh on Ruben Amorim, given that the 85 points gained would be good enough to win the league in four of the last seven seasons, and there is still plenty of sheen on his burgeoning reputation, especially after a positive campaign in the Champions League.

As for Benfica, another season of failure was mitigated slightly by a triumph in the UEFA Youth League. The supporters of Portugal's most popular club will be hoping the talented group of youngsters can go on to emulate Porto. The northerners won the competition in 2019 and just three years later many of that team played a key role in driving Porto to the league title this season. With Jorge Jesus gone, Rui Costa replacing long-standing president Luis Filipe Vieira and with Roger Schmidt set to become their first foreign coach since 2008, it feels like a clean slate for the Eagles.

Top of the world...Sergio Conceicao

COACH OF THE SEASON
With a third title and a second double in five seasons, the job **Sergio Conceicao** has done at Porto has been miraculous, especially when you consider the club's FFP limitations and arch-rivals Benfica's unprecedented spending for much of that period.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
Brought to Sporting on loan from PSG in the deal that saw Nuno Mendes head in the opposite direction, winger **Pablo Sarabia** provided service befitting of a regular Spain international for the Lisbon club, notching 21 goals in all competitions for the Lions.



Classy Spaniard... Pablo Sarabia

	LEAGUE CHAMPIONS	TOP SCORER	BEST OF THE REST
Austria BUNDESLIGA	Unsurprisingly, **Red Bull Salzburg** won their ninth consecutive league title, losing just once all season. The champions seamlessly transitioned to new manager Matthias Jaissle after the departure of Jesse Marsch last year.	In his final year in Austria, German *wunderkind* **Karim Adeyemi** topped the scoring charts with 19 goals, level with WSG Tirol's **Giacomo Vrioni**. Adeyemi's form earned him a move to Borussia Dortmund.	Salzburg's dominance over the rest of Austria is not restricted to the league, as they defeated Ried 3-0 in the Austrian Cup final to seal their fourth League-Cup double in a row, and eighth in nine years.
Azerbaijan PREMIER LEAGUE	After finishing second to Netchi Baku last season, **Qarabag** reclaimed top spot to make it eight titles in nine years, conceding 13 goals and losing just one of their 28 matches - a shock 3-1 defeat to bottom club Sebail.	Goals were split evenly among the champions' squad, with three of their players notching double figures. Brazilian **Kady** came out on top with 12, just one more than team-mates Filip Ozobic and Ibrahima Wadji.	Qarabag won their first League-Cup double since 2016-17, overcoming Zira - who were chasing their first trophy since being formed in 2014 - on penalties after a 1-1 draw after extra-time in the Cup final.
Belgium FIRST DIVISION A	**Club Brugge** reacted well to Philippe Clement's departure, losing just once after the coach joined Monaco in January. At the time, the league holders were seven points off top spot, but went on to seal their third title in a row.	**Deniz Undav**'s form in the first half of the season convinced Brighton & Hove Albion to pay €6 million for him in January, before loaning him straight back to Union Saint-Gilloise. He ended with 26 goals.	Union SG looked on for a fairytale return to the top flight, topping the table at the start of the play-offs. But just one win in their last five games - which also included a 1-0 defeat to Brugge - cost the historic club dearly.
Bosnia-Herzegovina PREMIER LEAGUE	**Zrinjski**, the most successful club in the league's history, returned to the top of the pile for the first time since 2017-18, finishing 27 points clear of second place to claim their seventh league title.	**Nemanja Bilbija** produced the best season of his career by far to ensure the champions dominated. His tally of 33 goals in 32 matches was eight goals more than the league's next two highest scorers combined.	Cup winners Velez were deducted three points after a pitch invasion during their league defeat to Boraca Banja. According to reports, the referee was attacked by fans after the match, with his car set on fire.
Bulgaria FIRST LEAGUE	**Ludogorets** continued their record as one of the most dominant domestic clubs in Europe by winning their 11th consecutive league title. Their nearest rivals, Alan Pardew's CSKA Sofia, finished 22 points behind.	Cypriot striker **Pieros Sotiriou** topped the charts with 17 goals for Ludogorets, pipping CSKA Sofia's Ecuadorian forward Jordy Caicedo to the Golden Boot by a single goal.	A disastrous end to the season for CSKA Sofia saw them thumped 5-0 by Ludogorets and lose to arch-rivals Levski Sofia in the Bulgarian Cup final. Pardew only took charge in April, but is already under significant pressure.
Croatia PRVA HNL	**Dinamo Zagreb** won their fifth title in a row and 23rd in total, but it was not easy. The capital city club won eight of their last ten matches to hold off Hajduk Split, who were chasing their first league title since 2005.	In the European Golden Shoe rankings, Hajduk's **Marko Livaja** was one of the top-ranked players from outside Europe's top five leagues after scoring 28 goals. Rijeka's Swiss international Josip Drmic was next with 21 strikes.	Hajduk Split made up for their disappointment in the league by winning the Croatian Cup, their first trophy since 2013. In the final, they recovered from going a goal down to defeat Rijeka 3-1 inside their home stadium.
Cyprus FIRST DIVISION	**Apollon Limassol** very much stumbled over the line to claim their first title since 2006. In February they were eight points clear at the top, before a run of eight draws in nine games. Fortunately for them, nobody capitalised.	AEK Larnika's 35-year-old captain **Ivan Trichovski** topped the league's scoring charts with 15 goals, just two more than Doxa Katokopias' Finnish striker Berat Sadik.	APOEL got back on track by finishing third, with a shot at qualifying for the Europa Conference League. The 28-time champions finished a disastrous eighth in 2021, having won seven leagues in a row from 2013-2019.

	LEAGUE CHAMPIONS	TOP SCORER	BEST OF THE REST
Czech Republic FIRST LEAGUE	**Viktoria Plzen** reclaimed the title after three in a row for Slavia Prague. In a dramatic end of season clash between the two, both sides scored stoppage-time penalties as Slavia missed the chance to close the gap.	Plzen's French forward **Jean-David Beauguel** produced his best season since arriving at the club in 2019, scoring 18 goals to beat Slovacko forward Vaclav Jurecka to the Golden Boot by one.	Jurecka also scored in the Czech Cup final as Slovacko won their first major trophy, beating Sparta Prague 3-1 in the final. The club is based in the town of Uherske Hradiste, home to just 25,000 people.
Denmark SUPERLIGA	After going top in the final game before the winter break in November, **Copenhagen** held on throughout the second half of the season to win their 14th league title, despite pressure from runners-up Midtjylland.	Silkeborg finished third thanks in large part to striker **Nicklas Helenius**, who scored 17 goals, and winger Nicolai Vallys, the league's most creative player with ten assists.	Midtjylland made up for missing out on the league by winning the Cup, beating OB on penalties in the final. Copenhagen on the other hand were dumped out in the third round in a shock 3-0 loss to second-tier Nykobing.
Greece SUPER LEAGUE	For the third year in a row, **Olympiakos** finished top of the table with PAOK their nearest challengers. The Piraeus-based club finished 19 points clear, losing just three games - although two of them to arch-rivals Panathinaikos.	Dutch striker **Tom van Weert** arrived at Volos last summer and scored 17 goals - one more than last season's Golden Boot winner, Youssef El-Arabi. His goals were not, however, enough to take his side into the top half.	Panathinaikos enjoyed a successful season under new manager Ivan Jovanovic, returning to European football after a five-year absence by winning the Greek Cup - their first piece of silverware since 2014.
Hungary NB I	**Ferencvaros**' domination of Hungarian football continued as they won their fourth title in a row by 12 points. The Budapest giants also completed the League-Cup double, beating Paksi 3-0 in the Cup final.	27-year-old striker **Martin Adam** earned his first Hungary caps after scoring 31 goals in 32 games for Paksi. The club had both the best attack and worst defence in the league, scoring 75 goals and conceding 63.	Founded in 2005, Puskas Akademia finished third and go to Conference League qualifying. MTK, Hungary's second-most successful club with 23 titles, were relegated to the second tier for the third time in six seasons.
Israel PREMIER LEAGUE	**Maccabi Haifa** sealed back-to-back titles for the first time since 2006, moving to 14 in total and taking them ahead of Hapoel Tel Aviv as the league's second-most successful team of all time.	Maccabi Haifa were also the league's top scorers, thanks largely to attacking midfielder **Omer Atzili**, who topped both the goal (20) and assist charts (ten). His team-mate Dean David was next on the goals list with 15.	A dramatic Cup final saw Hapoel Be'er Sheva lift the trophy for the second time in three years, as they beat Maccabi Haifa on penalties despite conceding an 87th-minute own goal equaliser in normal time.
Luxembourg NATIONAL DIVISION	After missing out on the league title last year by just two points, **F91 Dudelange** returned to win their fifth title in six years. They've now reduced the gap on Jeunesse Esch to 12 all-time league titles.	German midfielder **Dominik Stolz** scored 23 goals for Swift Hesperange, one more than Differdange's Portuguese striker Tino Barbosa.	After a strong start to the season, UNA Strassen had a poor 2022, eventually finishing in sixth place. Differdange and Fola Esch took the Europa Conference League qualifying spots.
Malta PREMIER LEAGUE	Floriana's hopes of a first non-COVID title since 1993 were ended by a 4-1 defeat to rivals **Hibernians** in March. They never recovered, failing to score in their next four games, by which time Hibs sealed the title.	Brazilian forward **Maxuell** scored 17 goals for Gzira United to secure a spot in Europa Conference League qualifying for the second season in a row.	Floriana consoled themselves on missing out on the title by winning the FA Trophy, beating Valletta with an extra-time winner. Their 21st win in the competition's history took them level with Sliema Wanderers.

	LEAGUE CHAMPIONS	TOP SCORER	BEST OF THE REST
Moldova NATIONAL DIVISION	Despite the mid-season departure of manager Yuriy Vernydub, who went to fight in Ukraine, **Sheriff Tiraspol** won their seventh title in a row under his assistant Dmytro Kara-Mustafa, only conceding eight goals.	Moldovan stiker **Vladimir Ambros** scored 17 goals for runners-up Petrocub, while he also finished with the most assists - also 17.	After stunning Real Madrid in the Champions League, Sheriff lost on penalties to Braga in the Europa League. In January, Floresti were excluded from the Moldovan top flight after being found guilty of match fixing.
North Macedonia FIRST FOOTBALL LEAGUE	Ten years after they were formed as the result of a merger between two clubs, and just seven years after being promoted to the top flight, **FK Shkupi** won their first league title, having finished second in the previous campaign.	Recruited from Nigerian side Rivers United last summer, **Sunday Adetunji** hit the ground running in his first season with Shkupi, scoring 20 goals for the league champions.	Second-tier side Sileks had an exceptional season, winning their own league with only one loss all season, and reaching the Cup final where they were beaten on penalties by first division outfit Makedonija.
Northern Ireland PREMIERSHIP	Cliftonville took the title race down to the wire by going unbeaten for their last 16 games, with only a point separating them and **Linfield** on the final day. Manager David Healy held on to guide his team to a fourth straight title.	Glentoran duo **Jay Donnelly** and Conor McMenamin proved themselves as the most prolific strike partnership in the league, notching 25 and 20 goals respectively.	Crusaders won the Cup in dramatic fashion, first scoring a 90th-minute equaliser with an assist from goalkeeper Jonny Tuffey, in the box for a corner, then stealing a 2-1 win in the last minute of extra-time.
Poland EKSTRAKLASA	With three games to go, Rakow Czestochowa were in pole position to win their first-ever league title. Yet a draw and a defeat allowed **Lech Poznan**, who had led for most of the season, back in to seal their first title since 2015.	Rakow's Spanish striker **Ivi Lopez** produced the best season of his career, scoring 20 goals for the runners-up, two more than Lech Poznan's Swedish striker Mikael Ishak and Radomiak Radom's Karol Angielski.	Rakow made up for missing out on the league by beating Lech Poznan in the Polish Cup final, lifting the trophy for the second year in a row. Fourteen-time league winners Wisla Krakow, meanwhile, were relegated.
Romania LIGA I	FCSB saw the title slip away in their penultimate game of the season, conceding a late equaliser to Voluntari to hand **Cluj** the title. In the next game, FCSB beat Cluj 3-1 to finish a single point behind them.	For the second season in a row, FCSB captain **Florin Tanase** finished as the league's top scorer, scoring 20 goals from an attacking midfield position.	18-time champions Dinamo Bucharest went down after losing to Universitatea Cluj in the relegation play-offs. They join Gaz Metan Media and Academica, who were hit with points deductions for financial reasons.
Russia PREMIER LEAGUE	In a season that was heavily disrupted by the departures of players and coaches due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, **Zenit** remained consistent enough to lift their fourth consecutive league title.	Ufa's 21-year-old striker **Gamid Agalarov** caught the eye by scoring 19 goals for the relegation strugglers, earning a call-up for the Russian national team and transfer links to Newcastle United.	Rubin Kazan's season proved absolutely disastrous after they were relegated by a last-minute defeat on the final day of the season.
Scotland PREMIERSHIP	After missing out on the historic ten in a row last season, **Celtic** went back on top ahead of 2021 champions Rangers. The two sides' head-to-head record proved key: two of Rangers' three defeats were against Celtic.	In his first season since joining Celtic from VVV Venlo last summer, Greek forward **Giorgos Giakoumakis** scored 13 goals in 21 matches, placing him level with Ross County midfielder **Regan Charles-Cook**.	Under former player Gio van Bronckhorst, who replaced Steven Gerrard as manager in November, Rangers proved an adept cup team. As well as reaching the Europa League final, they also lifted the Scottish FA Cup.

	LEAGUE CHAMPIONS	TOP SCORER	BEST OF THE REST
Serbia SUPERLIGA	**Red Star Belgrade** won their fifth title in a row with 100 points, but they were pushed all the way by arch-rivals Partizan, who racked up 98 points. The 0-0 draw between the two sides in April proved to be decisive.	Partizan's title chase was powered by Cape Verde striker **Ricardo Gomes**, who struck 29 goals on his return to the club. Red Star winger Aleksandar Katai was next on the list with 24 goals, including three hat-tricks.	As if losing out to Red Star in the title race wasn't hard enough for Partizan, they also lost to them in the Cup final, with Katai netting a brace in a 2-1 win for his side.
Slovakia FIRST FOOTBALL LEAGUE	**Slovan Bratislava** won their fourth league title in a row, as manager Vladimir Weiss completed a successful return to the club after leaving in 2012.	Only three players in the whole league struck double figures, with Ruzomberok forward Martin Regali and Trencin's Philip Arango netting ten, while the latter's team-mate **Jakub Kadak** hit 13.	Despite finishing fifth last season, SKF Sered have been relegated after failing to secure a license for next season due to the lack of an adequate stadium.
Slovenia PRVA LIGA	**Maribor** pipped Koper to the title in the final two weeks of the season, winning both of the final two games while their rivals could only pick up one solitary point.	Maribor's 30-year-old forward **Ognjen Mudrinski** topped the goal charts with 17 strikes, also earning the Player of the Year award.	Four-time champions Gorica will be back in the top flight next season. Legendary manager Miran Srebrnic, who guided them to their last title in 2006 and to second in 2017, returned last year to win the second tier.
Switzerland SUPER LEAGUE	**Zurich** ended their 13-year wait for a league title in emphatic fashion, finishing 14 points clear of Basel at the top of the table. Success came at a price though, with coach Andre Breitenreiter poached by Hoffenheim.	USA international **Jordan Pefok** scored 22 goals for BSC Young Boys, three more than Zurich's Assan Ceesay. Credit also goes to Servette winger Miroslav Stevanovic, who bagged 20 assists during the campaign.	Lugano won their first trophy in 29 years by beating St. Gallen 4-1 in the Swiss Cup final, completing a remarkable comeback for a club that went bankrupt in 2003 and only returned to the top flight in 2015.
Turkey SUPER LIG	For the second time in three years the title went outside the "Big Three" of Fenerbahce, Galatasaray and Besiktas, as it was **Trabzonspor** who won their first league since 1984, hinting that Turkish football is changing.	Five goals on the final day of the season – including a sumptuous Rabona finish – was not enough for Adana Demirspor's Mario Balotelli to beat Kasimpasa striker **Umut Bozok** to the Golden Boot, who scored 20.	While Fenerbahce can be satisfied with second place and a shot at Champions League qualification, 2021 champions Besiktas finished sixth, while Galatasaray slumped all the way down to 13th.
Ukraine PREMIER LEAGUE	The league was, of course, interrupted by the Russian invasion, yet the 18 games that were played were enough for Shakhtar Donetsk and Dynamo Kiev to be established at the top of the table, losing just once each.	24-year-old Ukraine international Artem Dovbyk struck 14 goals in just 17 matches for Dnipro, with Dynamo's Viktor Tsygankov not too far behind him on 11.	The season was cancelled with no title awarded, but the top five sides – Shakhtar, Dynamo, Dnipro, Zorya Luhansk and Vosrkla Poltava – will play in Europe if they are are able to resume playing in time.
Wales PREMIER LEAGUE	**The New Saints** returned to winning ways, after finishing second to Connah's Quay in 2020-21. TNS have now won nine of the last ten league championships.	Former Scotland Under-21 international **Declan McManus** struck 24 goals in 28 games after joining The New Saints from Dunfermline Athletic last summer.	Connah's Quay's title defence was dealt a huge blow when they were deducted 18 points for fielding an ineligible player. Without the sanction, they'd have finished third and entered Conference League qualifying.

Glenn Moore

Lyon reclaim their European crown

French giants return to the top of European football by beating last year's champions Barcelona

Lyon meant business. That was clear from the moment the Women's Champions League final kicked off on a steamy evening in Turin in front of a passionate, largely Barcelona-supporting crowd of 32,257.

Pressing high and in packs they disturbed the customary *élan* and poise of the defending champions, penning them back, forcing mistakes, and scoring goals – three in the opening 33 minutes.

That was, at least, an improvement on the last time the teams met, in the 2019 final, when Lyon were four up in 30 minutes. But unlike in Budapest it was completely unexpected.

Since then Barca had beaten, well, everybody, including Chelsea 4-0 in last year's final, Arsenal 4-0 and 4-1 in this year's group stage, and Wolfsburg 5-1 and Real Madrid 5-2 in the knockout stages.

Add the record 90,000-plus crowds, and the lustre of the Barca brand, and they were the sport's new queens.

Lyon, the game's *ancien regime*, were piqued. And in Turin they wasted no time showing they were still on the throne.

After six minutes Amandine Henry crunched into a tackle to win possession off Alexia Putellas, then cracked in a stunning 30-yarder. The gifted Selma Bacha delivered a sumptuous 23rd-minute cross that Ada Hegerberg, skilfully pulling off the centre-halves, headed home.

Hegerberg then took advantage of a befuddled defence to give Catarina Macario the easiest of tap-ins (which in her surprise she nearly missed).

Game over? Not quite. Just as Chelsea had had chances last year, which the usually deadly Sam Kerr and Pernille Harder had failed to take, so had Barcelona. Jenni Hermoso was this year's culprit.

But Putellas did get a goal back, whipping in Caroline Graham Hansen's cross before the break. Had Patricia Guijarro's audacious 50-yarder gone under the bar instead of hitting it, Barca may have taken advantage of the momentum shift.

Instead Lyon, deploying all the game-management accrued over years of elite-level performance, broke up play and disrupted their opponents' flow. They eased to their eighth Champions League title, six coming in the last seven seasons. Their superiority had been reasserted.

> Lyon eased to their eighth Champions League title, six coming in the last seven seasons. Their superiority had been reasserted

"Every defeat hurts but we knew this was a very important one as it was the chance to change history in our favour," said Barca boss Jonatan Giraldez, recognising the perception shift.

"My team talk was very easy. This is the most beautiful match and beautiful competition a club can dream of playing," said Lyon's Sonia Bompastor, the first winning female coach in 13 years, and the first to win as both a player and a coach.

That judgement has never been more true, for this was arguably the most significant campaign since UEFA rebranded it as the Champions League, with a one-off final, in 2009.

Back on top...Lyon's Ada Hegerberg

This year there was a group stage, centralised broadcasting, branding and sponsorship separate from the men's competition, and attractive prize money. Reaching the last 16 was worth €400,000. Winners Lyon will collect around €1.2m. These are sums to turn club executive heads, and, like crowds and club commercial deals, they are only going to get bigger.

More clubs will invest, and, in a potentially concerning development for NWSL, players worldwide will want to be involved in a competition that drew viewers from more than 200 countries.

Lyon's United States international Lindsay Horan said after the match: "This is what I dreamed of as a little girl, watching the men's Champions League. Look at this stadium, winning a game like this is everything."

The NWSL has many creditable factors, and the injection of two Californian franchises have helped lift it after a difficult year, but it cannot offer anything to touch the Champions League which now looks set to dominate the women's club game as it does the men's.

Heartbroken... Barcelona Femeni

Champions...Lyon lift the trophy

Round-up

Potential rematch... USA v Canada in last year's Olympic semi-finals

CONCACAF W PREVIEW

While the Euros have greater depth, the eight-nation CONCACAF W Championship is likely to have the most stellar finale. Unless there is an upset, the World Cup holders United States will meet the Olympic champions Canada in Guadalupe on 18 July.

Hosts Mexico (in the US' group – so putative semi-final opponents for Canada) are the team most likely to confound that prediction. Skippered by Real Madrid's Kenti Robles their team has a smattering of NWSL players with the home-based ones having experienced big crowds in the vibrant domestic league.

Jamaica have recruited WSL players with ancestral links such as Drew Spence (Chelsea) and Becky Spencer (Tottenham Hotspur) and have Manchester City's Bunny Shaw leading their attack. A Haiti team with several French-based players make up Group A and kick off the tournament against the US on 4 July.

Favourites to qualify with Canada from Group B are a Costa Rican side that features Shirley Cruz (OL Reign), Raquel Rodriguez (Portland Thorns) and Priscila Chinchilla (Glasgow City). Panama and Trinidad & Tobago – coched by former Southampton, Stoke, Sunderland and Cardiff striker Kenwyne Jones – make up the section.

WOMEN'S AFCON PREVIEW

Nigeria start as favourites for the Women's Africa Cup of Nations on the basis that they've won 11 of the 13 tournaments, including the last three, and made the semi-finals when they missed out in 2008 and 2012.

The only other champions, Equatorial Guinea, failed to qualify.

Nigeria also qualified the hard way, knocking out Ghana, then Ivory Coast, both semi-finalists within the last decade.

South Africa, beaten on penalties in the last final, and Cameroon, finalists in the two previous championships, are the most likely challengers. They and Nigeria were Africa's trio at the last World Cup, and the countries with most players overseas. Leading examples are Internazionale forward Ajara Nchout (Cameroon), Atletico Madrid attacker Thembi Kgatlana (South Africa) and Barcelona's Asisat Oshoala (Nigeria).

AFCON favourites...Nigeria

Nigeria and South Africa are in Group C, which is bad news for two debutants, Botswana and Burundi, who are also in the section.

Hosts Morocco, making their first appearance in more than two decades, are in a weak Group A with Senegal, Uganda and newcomers Burkina Faso. Cameroon head Group B with Zambia, Tunisia and the fourth debutant, Togo.

This tournament doubles up as qualifying for next year's World Cup with the semi-finalists progressing. The losing quarter-finalists will go into a repechage from which one will enter the inter-continental play-offs.

US AGREE PAY DEAL

After a six-year legal fight, the US women's team achieved an historic equal-pay agreement. Prize money gained in major tournaments will be shared as will ticket income and win bonuses. Both genders will have the same working conditions, from childcare and hotel quality to per diems and the right to play home internationals on grass pitches.

KOBE WIN FIRST WE TITLE

Kobe Leonessa are the first champions of Japan's WE (Women's Empowerment) League, taking the title ahead of runners-up Urawa Red Diamonds, whose Yuika Sugasawa was leading scorer, and third-placed Tokyo Verdy.

CANADA MOVE TOWARDS PROFESSIONALISM

Canada Soccer has taken a significant step towards enabling players to make a football living without leaving the country by appointing Breagha Carr-Harris, an experienced pro sports executive, to a new post of head of women's professional soccer.

Carr-Harris' remit is to establish a domestic professional league, and ideally also place at least one franchise in America's NWSL. At present the Olympic champions' entire squad play in the US or Europe.

UNDERDOGS REACH FRENCH CUP FINAL

Second division Yzeure Allier, from a town with a population of 13,000, reached the French Cup final. They lost 8-0 to Paris Saint-Germain, having been 5-0 down after 13 minutes, but it was nevertheless a remarkable achievement for an amateur team.

WILLIAMSON GETS THE LIONESSESS ARMBAND

Arsenal's Leah Williamson will captain England at this summer's European Championship. The 25-year-old, who can play at centre-back or in midfield, said: "I am honoured to be asked to lead us at the Euros. Steph Houghton is one of this country's all-time greats and to follow in her footsteps – and all of those special names who have led the team in the past – means so much." Manchester City's Houghton relinquished the armband after struggling to recover from an Achilles injury.

Proud... Williamson

All eyes on England

England ready to host finals, yet questions hang over venue choices

In April, giant table football figurines, of feminine design, were suspended five metres above London's Carnaby Street.

Once the heart of the swinging sixties, Carnaby Street is more of a tourist trap than an iconic address these days, but that perhaps made it the perfect choice to publicise ticket sales for the Women's Euros, taking place for the second time in England.

The stunt underlined how much the women's game has grown since the previous hosting, in 2005. Back then, the competition was held exclusively within the traditional boundaries of the northwest county of Lancashire, more than 200 miles from the capital, which largely ignored it.

It opened at Blackpool's Bloomfield Road and closed at Blackburn Rovers' Ewood Park. England's first match at what is now the Etihad Stadium drew a then-competition record 29,092 and the final attracted 21,105. But the other 11 non-England matches drew an average 2,528.

Seventeen years later England open the tournament at 70,000-capacity Old Trafford and the final is at 90,000-seat Wembley, and both matches will be sell-outs. Other locations include the home grounds of Southampton, Brighton, Sheffield United and Brentford.

Yet there is criticism that some venues are too small. Iceland captain Sara Bjork Gunnarsdottir described the choice of Manchester City's Academy Stadium, at which City's women play, as "shocking" and "embarrassing". Whilst capacity is usually 7,000, UEFA restrictions on standing means that has been cut down to 4,700.

"They haven't prepared for the fact that we can sell more than 4,000. It is disrespectful to women's football," said Gunnarsdottir, whose team play in two of the three matches scheduled at the Academy Stadium.

Leigh Sports Village, where Manchester United play, also seems to be an odd choice, not just for its small capacity (reduced to 8,100) but also for how hard it is to reach by public transport. How many non-England group matches sell out, or are even half-full, remains to be seen, but it does appear opportunities have been missed.

England will hope the same does not apply on the pitch. They were bottom of their group in 2005 but are now genuine contenders after three successive major tournament semi-finals.

Sarina Wiegman, who helped steer the Dutch to success in 2017, has been recruited to harness her experience of winning as hosts. While England have had too few genuinely competitive outings for the coach's liking, they looked promising in their spring tournament against Spain, Germany and Canada.

There is plenty of attacking talent, especially on the flanks with Manchester City's Lauren Hemp the most likely candidate to become a household name. To protect the defence Wiegman may deploy new skipper Leah Williamson as part of a midfield double-pivot with Keira Walsh, rather than in her club role of centre-back, leaving City's Alex Greenwood to partner Chelsea's Millie Bright at the heart of the defence.

Kick-off...the Euros launch event in Carnaby Street, London

Reigning champion... England coach Sarina Wiegman lifted the 2017 trophy with the Netherlands

Spain are the favourites, despite never winning a tournament knockout game, due to Barcelona's club success. Whether that experience enables them to get across the line when the pressure is on remains to be seen; Lyon's pre-eminence has failed to translate to a French triumph. But France have long promised without delivering. Their last major semi-final was back at the 2011 World Cup and they have never won a knockout match in the Euros. Maybe this year?

Germany are always contenders, but their preparation has been mixed. The same applies to the Dutch though they remain in consideration. The returning Ada Hegerberg could take Norway deep into the tournament, but maybe the best bet is Sweden.

There is a question mark about the age of several key players but there is also youth in Peter Gerhardsson's enterprising side, and anyway the summer temperatures in England shouldn't be too punishing on older legs. The Swedes' only major title came in the inaugural Euros in 1984, in England (it was a two-legged final then), but they have reached two

Olympic finals and a World Cup semi-final in the last six years.

The finals line-up was not confirmed until May, when UEFA removed Russia due to the invasion of Ukraine. Portugal, who lost to Russia 1-0 on aggregate in the play-offs, replaced them. All but two of the teams were present in 2017, the first 16-nation tournament. Finland return and Northern Ireland make their debut. They replace Russia and Scotland.

Russia's expulsion means the tournament consists entirely of teams from what was known, in Cold War days, as Western Europe, including Scandinavia, all of whose nations have qualified. In that respect nothing has changed from 2005, or even 1984 when only Western and Scandinavian teams entered.

This tournament, and the attention it will draw, is only likely to accelerate the divide. The west's wealth is a major factor, obviously, but given the comparatively small sums involved in the women's game just as significant is the political and social will.

That now exists in England as, 101 years after the FA banned the women's game for half a century, this summer will illustrate.

STADIUMS

- Amex Community Stadium, Brighton
- Bramall Lane, Sheffield
- Brentford Community Stadium, London
- Etihad Academy Stadium, Manchester
- Leigh Sports Village, Leigh
- New York Stadium, Rotherham
- Old Trafford, Manchester
- Stadium MK, Milton Keynes
- St Mary's Stadium, Southampton
- Wembley Stadium, London

Criticised host...the Leigh Sports Village

SCHEDULE

GROUP A		
Jul 6	**England v Austria**	Old Trafford
Jul 7	**Norway v Northern Ireland**	St Mary's
Jul 11	**Austria v Northern Ireland**	St Mary's
Jul 11	**England v Norway**	Amex Community Stadium
Jul 15	**Northern Ireland v England**	St Mary's
Jul 15	**Austria v Norway**	Amex Community Stadium
GROUP B		
Jul 8	**Spain v Finland**	Stadium MK
Jul 8	**Germany v Denmark**	Brentford Community Stadium
Jul 12	**Denmark v Finland**	Stadium MK
Jul 12	**Germany v Spain**	Brentford Community Stadium
Jul 16	**Finland v Germany**	Stadium MK
Jul 16	**Denmark v Spain**	Brentford Community Stadium
GROUP C		
Jul 9	**Portugal v Switzerland**	Leigh Sports Village
Jul 9	**Netherlands v Sweden**	Bramall Lane
Jul 13	**Sweden v Switzerland**	Bramall Lane
Jul 13	**Netherlands v Portugal**	Leigh Sports Village
Jul 17	**Switzerland v Netherlands**	Bramall Lane
Jul 17	**Sweden v Portugal**	Leigh Sports Village
GROUP D		
Jul 10	**Belgium v Iceland**	Etihad Academy Stadium
Jul 10	**France v Italy**	New York Stadium
Jul 14	**Italy v Iceland**	Etihad Academy Stadium
Jul 14	**France v Belgium**	New York Stadium
Jul 18	**Iceland v France**	New York Stadium
Jul 18	**Italy v Belgium**	Etihad Academy Stadium
QUARTER-FINALS		
(1) Jul 20	**1st Group A v 2nd Group B**	Amex Community Stadium
(2) Jul 21	**1st Group B v 2nd Group A**	Brentford Community Stadium
(3) Jul 22	**1st Group C v 2nd Group D**	Leigh Sports Village
(4) Jul 23	**1st Group D v 2nd Group C**	New York Stadium
SEMI-FINALS		
(5) Jul 26	**Winner 1 v Winner 3**	Bramall Lane
(6) Jul 27	**Winner 2 v Winner 4**	Stadium MK
FINAL		
Jul 31		Wembley Stadium

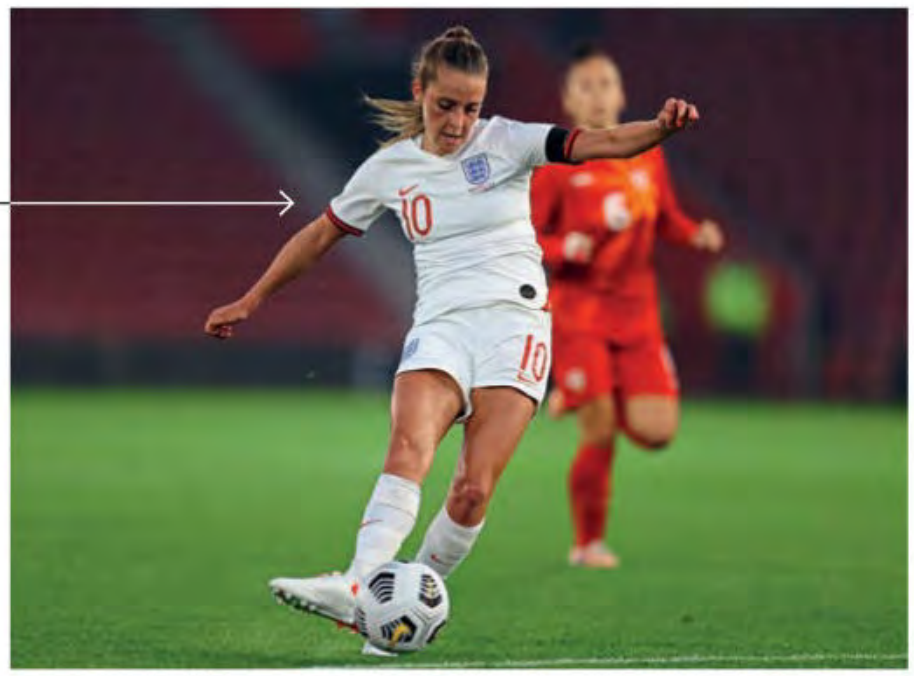
6 of the best

Euro 2022 ones to watch

Glenn Moore reveals the players that could light up this summer's tournament in England

1 Ella TOONE

ENGLAND



How much of a role Toone plays for the Lionesses at the Euros is likely to depend on the fitness of Fran Kirby, but concern over the Chelsea creator's readiness is alleviated by Toone's excellent form for club and country.

First capped in February 2021 – against Northern Ireland where she scored a penalty on her debut – Toone has been a regular under Sarina Wiegman, making and scoring goals as if a seasoned international. A tally of ten goals in her first 13 appearances makes her extremely hard to ignore.

A Manchester United youth player, she returned to the club when it formed an adult women's team in 2018 following spells at Blackburn Rovers and Manchester City, and has been a fixture ever since. The 22-year-old wears No.7 for United but plays as a No.10.

2 Marie-Antoinette KATOTO

FRANCE

Omitting Marie-Antoinette Katoto from the home-hosted 2019 World Cup squad was a controversial call by French coach Corinne Diacre – and in hindsight probably a wrong one. Katoto was the domestic top scorer but Diacre was unimpressed with her attitude. Whether Diacre felt the criticism hit home or that she simply could not ignore Katoto's talent any longer is unclear, but the Paris Saint-Germain striker has become a regular.

A tally of 24 goals in just 28 appearances can be misleading given the international mismatches of the women's game, but the 23-year-old scored against the US in 2021 and twice each against Brazil and Netherlands this year. She appears unhappy in Paris and the Euros could be a shop window.

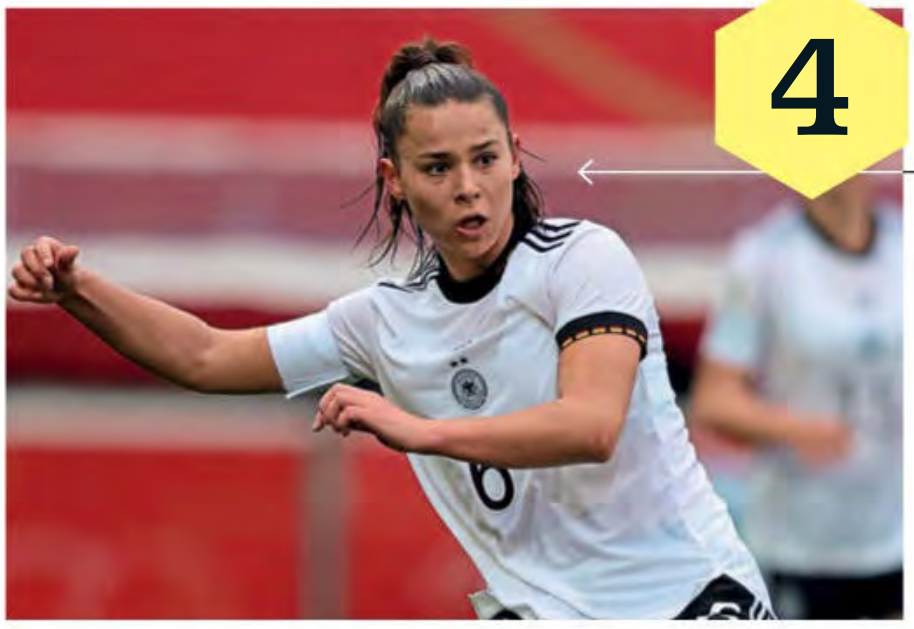
3 Ada HEGERBERG
NORWAY

This is a huge tournament for the inaugural Ballon d'Or Feminin winner (in 2018), as it caps her return to the international arena after a self-imposed five-year exile.

Hegerberg, who turns 27 during the finals, has recently returned from a 21-month absence due to an ACL injury and her form has been good.

Her exile means this is only her third major tournament. At 18 she was in the team that reached the final of Euro 2013, scoring once. Two years later she was nominated for the Best Young Player award at the 2015 World Cup, but Norway went out in the last 16.

So, while she has been one of the world's dominant club players, she has yet to make the impact on the international game her talent demands. This may be the time.



4 Lena OBERDORF
GERMANY

Central defensive midfielders are rarely the stars of tournaments, but there is precedent for Lena Oberdorf being a key figure this summer. At the men's 1996 Euros, also held in England, Dieter Eilts was critical to Germany's success.

There the comparison ends. Eilts was a 31-year-old journeyman and Berti Vogts' decision to entrust him with the important role was a surprise. Oberdorf, now 20, was such a tyro she made her senior debut while still at school and had to take exams between matches at the 2019 World Cup.

Now a fundamental part of Wolfsburg's success and a fixture in the national side – where her versatility means she sometimes plays at centre-back – she will have a big role to play if Germany are to improve on quarter-final exits at the 2017 Euros and 2019 World Cup.

5 Damaris EGURROLA
NETHERLANDS

An American-born former Spanish international, Egurrola has one of the most interesting backstories of the Euros.

The 22-year-old was born in Orlando while her father played pelota in the America Jai Alai leagues, before returning to the Basque Country where she was spotted by Athletic Bilbao. At 19 she made her debut for Spain but only played a few minutes.

Moves to Everton, then Lyon followed. Egurrola also made a change at international level, taking advantage of her Dutch mother's nationality to switch to the defending European champions.

The defensive midfielder is a threat at set-pieces, and scored twice off the bench against South Africa on her debut in April.

6 Aitana BONMATI
SPAIN

Observers of Spain and Barcelona tend to focus on the brilliant Alexia Putellas, but Aitana Bonmati is an increasingly influential figure.

The 24-year-old attacking midfielder is small of stature but fleet of foot and thought. She often leads the press on those rare occasions Barcelona don't have possession and darts through defences, both with the ball and off it into space, when they do.

Captain of Spain's Euro-winning U19 team in 2017, she is now a regular for *La Roja*'s senior side, and recently signed a new contract with Barca too, keeping her at the club she joined at the age of 13 until 2025.

Group A

Austria, England, Northern Ireland, Norway

Ada Hegerberg's return to the Norwegian fold adds spice to a group that otherwise looks very familiar. England, Austria and Northern Ireland are currently in the same World Cup qualifying group, England knocked Norway out of the last two World Cups, and Norway shared a Euros qualifying group with Northern Ireland, winning both matches 6-0.

Northern Ireland have also lost thrice in 18 months to England, 4-0 at Wembley and 5-0 in Belfast in World Cup qualifying, and a 6-0 friendly defeat with a weakened team at St George's Park.

These results are unsurprising given the bulk of Kenny Shiels' team are part-time, most playing in the domestic league and others in England's second-tier Championship. However, since January they have had the benefit of training full-time thanks to support from the province's government. In Everton's Simone Magill and Liverpool's Rachel Furness they have some quality. And there is a strong spirit, as evinced by the way players rallied round Shiels after he said female players concede goals in quick succession as they are "more emotional than men".

Nevertheless, they are the group's outsiders. Currently 46th in the world rankings – the only team at the finals outside the top 30 – this is their first major championship and in some ways their task is already done. Qualifying has led to a surge of interest underlined by attracting a national record 15,348 to Windsor Park for the World Cup qualifier with England. That is not to suggest they are merely here for the ride though. Backed by a vocal support they will frustrate any team that takes them lightly.

Austria, who have taken four points from six against Northern Ireland in World Cup qualifying, pose a threat to the group's heavyweights. Five years ago they were surprise semi-finalists, topping a section that included France and Switzerland, then beating Spain on penalties in the quarter-finals before going out the same way to Denmark in the last four.

Home nations rivals... Northern Ireland's Julie Nelson fights for the ball with England's Lauren Hemp during a 2023 World Cup qualifier

They only conceded one goal in 510 minutes in that tournament and remain defensively strong. They were obstinate opposition when they met England at Sunderland in World Cup qualifying in November, with the 1-0 margin failing to reflect England's territorial dominance.

Comeback... Norway star Ada Hegerberg

Half of the squad play in Germany's Bundesliga, and there are outstanding players at each end of the park in the form of Hoffenheim goalscorer Nicole Billa and Arsenal goalkeeper Manuela Zinsberger. Coached by former national team player Irene Fuhrmann, Austria come into the finals in good form.

Hegerberg returns to a **Norway** team strong enough to provide an appropriate platform for her talent, assuming her re-integration has been smooth. Caroline Graham Hansen is arguably the most potent wide attacker in Europe and Barcelona team-mate Ingrid Engen a growing presence in midfielder. Frida Maanum has established herself as an important player at Arsenal and Guro Reiten forced her way into Chelsea's formidable attacking line-up.

However, goalkeeper Cecilie Fiskerstrand is out with an ACL suffered in May while Maren Mjelde has struggled to get back into Chelsea's team after eight months out with a similar injury. Coach Martin Sjogren will hope his clever, versatile captain is at least close to her best by July, though there will be precious little opportunity to regain match sharpness.

England are still based around a core of Manchester City players, with Steph Houghton named in the provisional squad despite not playing since January. The defensive lynchpin has inevitably lost the captaincy with Arsenal's Leah Williamson taking over in a generational shift.

Injury has ruled out Williamson's club team-mate Jordan Nobbs, while there are similar concerns over Fran Kirby. But Lucy Bronze is returning to form and fitness and Chloe Kelly could be ready in time. Finishing has been an issue for England against elite opposition, despite Ellen White's lethality, but reaching the last four is the minimum.

Austria

Euros best: Semi-finals (2017)
Coach: Irene Fuhrmann
Captain: Viktoria Schnaderbeck
Route to the finals: Finished second in Group G to France, holding them to a 0-0 draw in the process, to qualify as one of the three best runners-up.

England

Euros best: Runners-up (1984, 2009)
Coach: Sarina Wiegman
Captain: Leah Williamson
Route to the finals: With no qualifiers, England placed great stock in the Arnold Clark Cup, which they hosted and won in February.

Northern Ireland

Euros best: Debut
Coach: Kenny Shiels
Captain: Marissa Callaghan
Route to the finals: Despite finishing as the worst runners-up across all nine groups, Northern Ireland overcame Ukraine 4-1 on aggregate in the play-offs.

Norway

Euros best: Champions (1987, 1993)
Coach: Martin Sjogren
Captain: Maren Mjelde
Route to the finals: Topped Group C with a 100 per cent record, although two of their fixtures were cancelled.

Group B

Denmark, Finland, Germany, Spain

It did not take long for Group B to be anointed the "group of death", though in truth it is more a group of certain death for **Finland**. Semi-finalists in 2005, when the Euros were last staged in England, with the growth of women's football they have been overtaken by countries with larger populations and wealthier men's club structures.

Finland still produce decent players, almost all of whom go abroad to make their careers, but Juventus defender Tuija Hyyrynen is the only one currently holding down a place at one of the continent's elite.

The Finns start against **Spain**, who have made the transition from rank outsiders in 2017 to co-favourites this time despite never winning a knockout match at a major tournament. Their new status is primarily based on the fact that the bulk of the team play for the outstanding Barcelona side. Their Champions League experience will be useful as the tournament moves into the business end, but first Spain need to ensure they escape from the group.

They should do. Club familiarity will help. Keeper Sandra Panos and three of the likely back four are at Barca – the exception being Manchester United's Catalan-born Ona Batlle who is linked with a move there. Barca's Alexia Putellas and Aitana Bonmati are the key midfielders. Up front it is a different story as the bulk of Barca's starting forwards are foreign. Real Madrid's Esther Gonzalez is likely to lead the line with creative support from Jenni Hermoso of...Barcelona.

Real Madrid's 21-year-old winger Athenea del Castillo, outstanding in England in their February tournament, could shine if given a spot in the squad, and a chance on the pitch.

Germany used to dominate this event. From 1989 to 2013 they won eight of nine finals, missing out in 1993 when they lost in the semi-finals on penalties to hosts Italy. Then, in 2017, Denmark stunned them in the Rotterdam quarter-final.

Favourites...Spanish players celebrate a goal by Alexia Putellas (L)

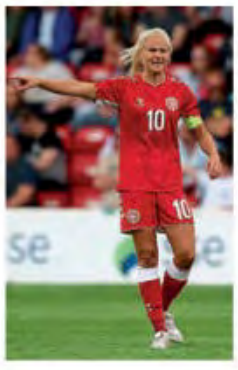
Steffi Jones was replaced as coach by former national team-mate Martina Voss-Tecklenburg, but there was another quarter-final exit at World Cup 2019, at the hands of Sweden.

In fairness to Voss-Tecklenburg then, she had only six months preparation. Three years on, however, it is still unclear what her best team is, a situation compounded by the loss of Dzsenifer Marozsan (injury) and Melanie Leupolz (pregnant).

Having several players absent due to COVID-19 during England's February tournament was a further complication, but if Voss-Tecklenburg can pull together a fully-fit squad, and find a starting XI, she has plenty of very good players to call upon.

A core of these players are young, notably Klara Buhl, Sydney Lohmann, Lena Oberdorf and Giulia Gwinn. If it transpires Germany are not ready this summer, they will be back threatening to win silverware soon.

Denmark reached the final in 2017 and have one of the world's best players in Pernille Harder. However, last September both Nadia Nadim and Nicoline Sorensen suffered serious ACL injuries, playing for Racing Louisville and Everton respectively. It is touch-and-go whether either striker will be fit enough to not just be selected, but to make an impact. Back-up Signe Bruun has scored heavily in World Cup qualifying but only started twice for Manchester United since joining on loan from Lyon in January.



Star player...Denmark striker Pernille Harder

There are personnel problems in defence too. Everton's Rikke Sevecke has not played since January due to injury while skipper Simone Boye Sorensen is fit, but has rarely featured since swapping Bayern Munich for Arsenal last summer.

Against this backdrop the group looks hard to escape, but Danish teams do have a habit of performing when least expected.

Gemany boss... Martina Voss-Tecklenburg

Denmark

Euros best: Runners-up (2017)
Coach: Lars Sondergaard
Captain: Pernille Harder
Route to the finals: Narrowly edged out Italy to finish top of Group B by three points, thanks to a 3-1 victory in Empoli and a brace by Nadia Nadim.

Finland

Euros best: Semi-finals (2005)
Coach: Anna Signeul
Captain: Tinja-Riikka Korpela
Route to the finals: Topped a group featuring Portugal and Scotland, securing 1-0 stoppage-time victories in two of their four games against the pair.

Germany

Euros best: Champions (1989, 1991, 1995, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013)
Coach: Martina Voss-Tecklenburg
Captain: Alexandra Popp
Route to the finals: Topped Group I without breaking a sweat, scoring at least three goals in every game.

Spain

Euros best: Semi-finals (1997)
Coach: Jorge Vilda
Captain: Irene Paredes
Route to the finals: A surprising 0-0 draw in Poland was the only blot on their copybook, winning their other seven games and scoring a joint-high 48 goals.

Group C

Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland

A tough group for Switzerland and Portugal, who find themselves paired with two of the top-five ranked teams in the world and the two best European finishers at the 2019 World Cup. The Netherlands, ranked fifth in the world, were finalists, while No.2-ranked Sweden came third and followed that up by winning silver at last year's Olympics in Japan.

The Dutch are the defending European champions and while they no longer have Sarina Wiegman at the helm they have the same squad core and a good coach in Mark Parsons, the Englishman who led Portland Thorns to considerable success in NWSL.

Parsons only took charge of the **Netherlands** in September so has been trying to get to know his players and build for the European Championship while also pursuing qualification for the 2023 World Cup. Home and away draws with the Czech Republic means that is far from guaranteed – the Dutch will need to beat group leaders Iceland in September to pip them.

There were mixed performances too, in the Tournoi, with Parsons blaming himself for the 3-0 defeat to the French. While largely sticking to Wiegman's typically Dutch 4-3-3 formation he has experimented with alternatives, and especially with players, calling up 43 for his first 11 matches.

The key ones are likely to be the usual suspects. PSV's former Arsenal and Atletico Madrid keeper Sari van Veenendaal is No.1, ex-Barca centre-back Stefanie van der Gragt is at the heart of the defence, Ajax team-mate Sherida Spitse a midfield stalwart alongside Manchester United's Jackie Groenen, and Vivianne Miedema (Arsenal) and Lieke Martens (Barcelona) lead the attack.

There is young talent in full-back Caitlin Dijkstra and a new face in Lyon's Damaris Egurrola, who has switched from Spain and may take the holding midfield role from Ajax's promising, but relatively inexperienced Victoria Pelova. And can coach Parsons find a place for Wolfsburg's in-form Jill Roord? With this quality the Dutch are genuine contenders.

Defending champions... Netherlands won their first Euros in 2017

So are **Sweden**, who have become an inventive, attractive side under Peter Gerhardsson, and one with a lot of experience. Hedvig Lindahl (39), Nilla Fischer (37) and Caroline Seger (37) have all decided to continue playing after their Yokohama heartbreak.

With Kosovare Asllani and Sofia Jakobsson both 32 as well Sweden may be too experienced, but there is young talent too, such as Everton's Hanna Bennison, while the likes of Magdalena Eriksson and Stina Blackstenius are still approaching their prime. Add Hanna Glas, Amanda Ilestedt and Fridolina Rolfo and it is clear Sweden are real contenders to go all the way.

Switzerland's prospects of reaching World Cup 2023 took a hit in the spring, drawing in Romania then being beaten at home by Italy. That handed the latter group leadership and probable automatic qualification.

Record goalscorer... Switzerland star Ana-Maria Crnogorcevic in action at Euro 2017

The April results followed a disappointing camp in Marbella in February when they were held by Northern Ireland and lost to Austria. After an impressive 2021, including beating Czech Republic in a play-off to reach these Euros, it hints at a difficult tournament.

Nils Nielsen took his native Denmark to the final in 2017, but if his current team are to even get out of the group strong performances from Ana-Maria Crnogorcevic (Barcelona), Lia Walti (Arsenal) and Ramona Bachmann (PSG) will be required. Freiburg's teenage midfielder Riola Xhemaili could announce herself as a talent.

Portugal, Russia's replacement, have a few players with experience outside the modest domestic league, notably Ana Borges who played for both Atletico Madrid and Chelsea. They also defeated a decent Norway team – containing the likes of Engen, Maanum and Vilde Boe Risa – in the Algarve Cup in February.

However, they lost a re-match in the third-place play-off, highlighting that while they may pull off a shock result they are unlikely to qualify from a strong group.

Renewed rivalry...Portugal and Sweden clashed in February's Algarve Cup

Netherlands

Euros best: Champions (2017)
Coach: Mark Parsons
Captain: Sari van Veenendaal
Route to the finals: Won all ten of their qualifiers, and joined Spain and Denmark in scoring 48 goals. Only one player registered more goals than Sherida Spitse's ten.

Portugal

Euros best: Group stage (2017)
Coach: Francisco Neto
Captain: Claudia Neto
Route to the finals: Late call-ups after Russia were kicked out. Two narrow wins over Scotland secured a place in the play-offs, where they lost 1-0 on aggregate.

Sweden

Euros best: Champions (1984)
Coach: Peter Gerhardsson
Captain: Caroline Seger
Route to the finals: Another side to qualify with a near-perfect record and reach the 40-goal milestone, only dropping points in a 1-1 draw with runners-up Iceland.

Switzerland

Euros best: Group stage (2017)
Coach: Nils Nielsen
Captain: Lia Walti
Route to the finals: Two 1-1 draws with Czech Republic in the play-offs – the first after a stoppage-time equaliser – meant qualification was secured via a penalty shootout.

Group D

Belgium, France, Iceland, Italy

One day **France** will deliver on the immense talent of its women's national team and win a tournament, and when they do they might well – like Spain's men – go on and win several. Might this be the year, at a venue a short hop away across the English Channel?

Form is good. They headed towards the finals off the back of a dozen straight victories including defeats of Netherlands and Brazil at the 2022 Tournoi. That followed 2021 wins over England and Germany.

However, in recent years the French have not been the most harmonious of squads and issues remain. The fall-out from the infamous attack by masked men with iron bars on Kheira Hamraoui last November continues to affect Paris Saint-Germain, and the club dropped the midfielder recently after an alleged training-ground fracas with club and country team-mate Sandy Baltimore.

After recalling her for the Tournoi in February, head coach Corinne Diacre left Hamraoui out of her squad for Euro 2022. Meanwhile, only a handful of Lyon's Champions League winners will be in England after Diacre fell out with several of them, including former captain Amandine Henry, record scorer Eugenie Le Sommer and goalkeeper Sarah Bouhaddi, a trio with more than 400 caps between them.

None of them made the cut, although Wendie Renard, stripped of the captaincy by Diacre in 2017, has had the armband restored (to her surprise), and the pair have been reconciled in pursuit of a common goal.

With Griedge Mbock Bathy likely to partner Renard in central defence and Selma Bacha replacing injured, and pregnant, team-mate Amel Majri at left-back, the defence seems likely to be Lyon-based.

The attack will be built around PSG with Marie-Antoinette Katoto (controversially omitted from the 2019 World Cup by Diacre), Kadidiatou Diani and Baltimore all likely to figure.

Under pressure... can France deliver on their potential?

Les Bleues ought to cruise through the group even if it is the only one with all teams in the world's top 20. **Italy**, their game on the up with Serie A turning professional next season, are the main threat. They surprised many at the 2019 World Cup and several key players will have gained valuable experience and confidence from the run to the Champions League quarter-finals by Juventus.

Dangerous... Italy striker Cristiana Girelli

With a World Cup next year it is not quite the last hurrah for 30-somethings Barbara Bonansea, Cristiana Girelli and Sara Gama, but Italy's prospects in England seem better than in Australia and New Zealand in 2023, and the trio of veterans, so key to the *Azzurre*'s revival, will be keen to at least reach their first semi-final in a quarter-century.

Belgium were debutants in 2017, when they performed creditably with a win over Norway. They have proved qualification was no fluke by doing it again. Low on star power but well organised, long-serving coach Ives Serneels will be aiming to break new ground by reaching the knockout stage.

In a largely domestic-based squad much may depend on skipper Tessa Wullaert, who has experience of England from her time at Manchester City, and veteran Janice Cayman (Lyon).

Iceland are in need of a good news story after the men's team, lauded for their success at Euro 2016, became embroiled in a sex abuse scandal that led to the resignation of the national FA board.

The women's team are capable of introducing some positivity. This is their fourth successive Euros and they will hope to repeat their performance in 2013 when they made the quarter-finals.

The majority of the players are based abroad, most notably 31-year-old Lyon midfielder Sara Bjork Gunnarsdottir, who will be appearing in her fourth finals since making her debut at 16.

Belgium

Euros best: Group stage (2017)
Coach: Ives Serneels
Captain: Tessa Wullaert
Route to the finals: Tine De Caigny topped the qualifying scoring charts with 12 goals to narrowly secure top-spot over Switzerland in Group H.

France

Euros best: Quarter-final (2009, 2013, 2017)
Coach: Corinne Diacre
Captain: Wendie Renard
Route to the finals: Swept aside Group G with ease, posting double-figure scores against both North Macedonia and Kazakhstan.

Iceland

Euros best: Quarter-finals (2013)
Coach: Thorsteinn Halldorsson
Captain: Sara Bjork Gunnarsdottir
Route to the finals: A 2-0 loss in Gothenburg against Sweden cost them top spot in Group F, though they still made it through as one of the best runners-up.

Italy

Euros best: Runners-up (1993, 1997)
Coach: Milena Bertolini
Captain: Sara Gama
Route to the finals: Qualified as the best runners-up, thanks to their goal difference being significantly boosted by a 12-0 win v Israel.

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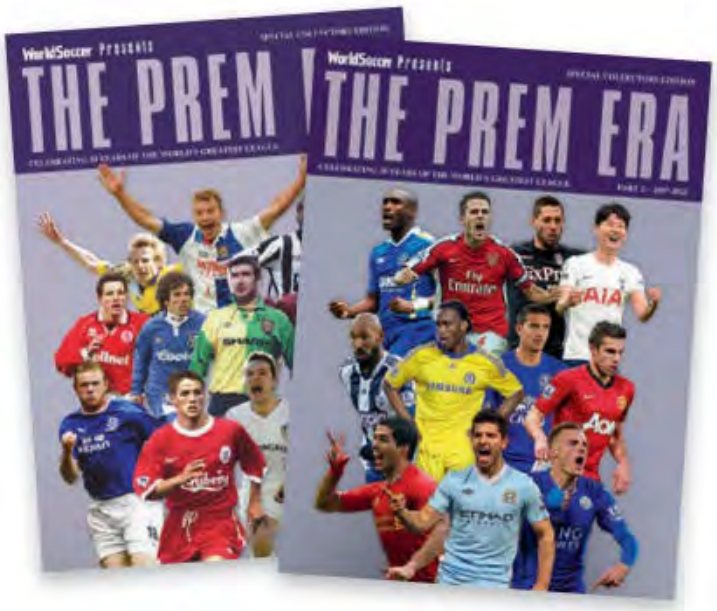

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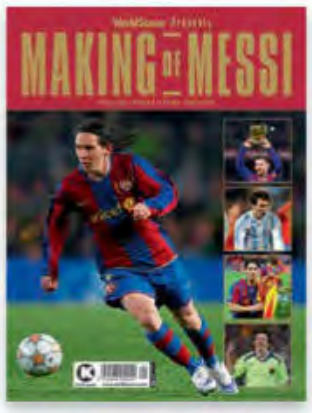

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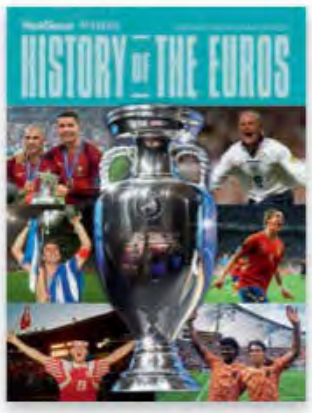

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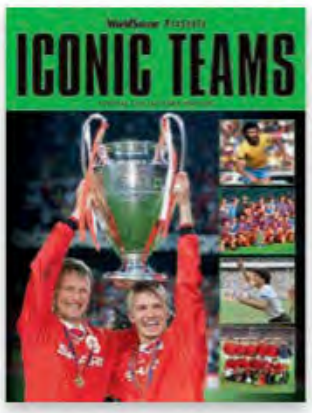

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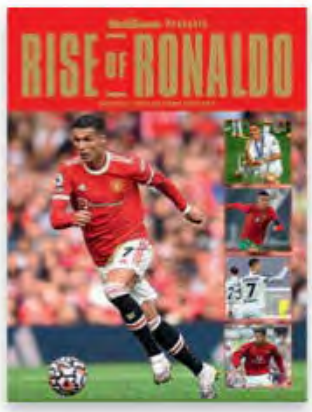

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STANLEY MENZO

"Giants in the making? Sure, why not?"

Former Ajax and Netherlands goalkeeper Stanley Menzo has taken charge of Suriname, the country where he was born, and has high hopes of turning them into a CONCACAF powerhouse

This must be as close to a dream job as anyone can get, going back to where you were born and taking charge of the national team?
It was always my dream to give something back for my home country. I did that with other people when I played for the Suriprofs [a team of players of Surinamese origin that plays an annual charity match] but, yes, to be coach of the national team is a dream. It's close to 100 per cent of what I want to achieve.

Is there added pressure because you are one of the real stars of Surinamese football?
Yes, the expectation is high, because we can use foreign-based players now that the nationality laws have changed. And of course, with my reputation as a player and as a coach, people expect me to do the job that they want to see, and I can understand that.

Suriname is a country that needs some success, especially in soccer. Economically they need success, but in soccer, they are waiting for success. We have a great opportunity because we can use players from the Netherlands. They can get a second passport and now play for Suriname. So yes, there are big expectations but we have to be realistic. And that's what I try to tell them that it will take time to evolve from playing and thinking at an amateur level to becoming really professional. We will need patience.

Suriname's fortunes have already changed with the inclusion of Dutch-born players now able to claim double nationality, but are there many still waiting in the wings?
Yes, there are a lot more players with Suriname roots. The only thing is that they have to make a decision to choose Suriname. Before that I can't select them. Most of the Dutch players between 20 and 35 still hope to play for the Dutch national team. They don't want to make the change yet. Then you have players between 25 and 30 who have other things that keep them from making the nationality switch. For me, it's a challenge to get them to realise that we have a great opportunity to write history.

But, at the end, they have to make the choice. And the younger players feel less of a connection with Suriname, those who are third generation, whose grandparents came from Suriname but whose parents were also born in the Netherlands. They are reluctant as well. But when you look at the number of players who qualify to play for both the Netherlands and Suriname, then you realise the great potential that we have.

You must have then spent plenty of time already just trying to recruit players?
Yes. We have a management bureau in the Netherlands recruiting players. I'm also trying to recruit, making phone calls, talking with players. That's why I say: 'It's up to them; they have to make a choice'. And a lot of them say they are not ready to choose yet. Of course, Suriname is not highly ranked and still in the transition from amateur to becoming professional. That also creates some doubt among the players.

If you can get the majority of the players who are eligible to come and play, do you think Suriname is a sleeping giant?
Yes, but the thing is, we have a big opponent, and we're not the best national team in our region. Rather, it all starts with the organisation in federation, where there has to be a change to thinking professionally. There are players who are playing in the Premier League and in the Bundesliga and they won't come to play for Suriname if things are not properly organised. The big challenge is how can we find something to change their minds so that they choose for Suriname? The prospect of playing a World Cup? But there's a lot to do to get anywhere near there. But giants in the making? Sure, why not?

Suriname compete in League A of the CONCACAF Nations League in June after winning promotion in the 2019-20 edition, but what do you think about your draw against Jamaica and Mexico?
I don't know what Mexico are going to do in terms of using the Nations League as preparation for the World Cup or not, but they are favourites. Jamaica are our main opponents for the second spot. We lost to them in the last Gold Cup [2-0 in Orlando in July 2021] but they are not unbeatable. We won't have time to work much with the players because of the tight schedule and the travelling but that will be the same for everybody.

What are your long-term ambitions for the team? CONCACAF will have six places at the next World Cup finals in 2026...
That's what I try to tell the players, that there's a big chance that you can play at a World Cup. But we have to start now preparing and creating a team. Canada had a long-term vision and now they have qualified. They prepared with a five-year plan, progressively strengthening their team. But the main part of the team was there for a long time.

If you're ambitious, this is the highest level you can reach. So long-term this is what we are striving for, developing a better national team and good youth development. In the meantime, we must try to get everybody motivated and inspired. We must also qualify for the Gold Cup because then we're going to play a lot of matches and the team will develop more and more.

How much did your previous stint as national coach of Aruba help you prepare for this bigger job?
Aruba was important. I got to know about the CONCACAF region, got to know the strengths and weaknesses of football around here. You know the mentality of the players might be professional but it's still a Caribbean organisation. So you start to learn how to deal with that. Things don't always work out like you might be used to in the Netherlands.

It's a totally different organisation, living environment, mentality. And that means working with Aruba handed me a small advantage.

You played under Johan Cruyff at Ajax, how much does his coaching methodology resonate with yours?
A lot. But I think I've had more of an influence from Louis van Gaal because I worked longer with him, and when I was more experienced. I was a more mature player and took more in. With Cruyff, it was like a journey, like 'well, where am I now?' I was young and not so experienced and so everything seemed to flash past me. With Van Gaal, I was older and I could take in more of the way of working. I saw how you build a team, how he built the way of playing and how you built a way of coaching. But Cruyff had a real insight into the game, his way of thinking was not much different from that of Van Gaal – even if they never saw eye-to-eye!

Interview by Mark Gleeson

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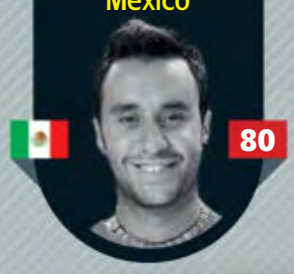

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2022 Copa Libertadores... update as the group stage concludes

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CAF Champions League...review of the 2021-22 campaign

South America

TIM VICKERY

Brazil and Argentina continue to lead the way

The Copa Libertadores group phase concludes with Brazilian and Argentinian sides dominating the South American scene

Since the change of format in 2017, when the competition began to be stretched out over the year, South America's Copa Libertadores has been almost entirely dominated by Brazil and Argentina – and this pattern was clear in the 2022 group phase.

Twelve of the teams who go into the last 16 are drawn from the big two. Both Brazil and Argentina have six representatives each. Of the favourites, only two had to break sweat. Corinthians of Brazil and Argentina's Boca Juniors, who met in the final a decade ago, were in the same group, could only manage five goals each and were forced to chew their fingernails until the final whistle of the sixth game.

Elsewhere, though, the big guns came up against little opposition. Palmeiras, champions in both the last two years, made astonishingly light work of an admittedly easy group, winning all six matches and scoring 25 goals in the process – often with understrength sides. Fellow Brazilians Flamengo won five and drew one, while domestic

Brazil v Argentina... players of Corinthians and Boca Juniors compete for the ball during the group stage

Double hat-trick...River Plate's Julian Alvarez takes home two balls after scoring six goals v Alianza Lima

Top goalscorer... Palmeiras forward Rafael Navarro

double winners Atletico Mineiro booked their place with a round to spare, and only lost their long unbeaten record in the competition in the last group game.

Argentina's River Plate also won five and drew one, and played plenty of attractive football, with Manchester City-bound striker Julian Alvarez helping himself to six goals in one game against Alianza Lima of Peru. And Estudiantes confirmed pre-tournament suspicions that they would be strong, mixing no-nonsense pragmatism and an emphasis on set-pieces with moments of inspiration. And these two and Boca are joined in the last 16 by an attractive Velez Sarsfield side who tightened up a weak defence, plus Colon of Santa Fe and Talleres of Cordoba, who are unlikely to make a serious challenge for the title but who are certainly enjoying the ride.

The big three from Brazil plus Corinthians are also joined by Luiz Felipe Scolari's Athletico Paranaense and by Fortaleza, excitingly coached by Argentina's Juan Pablo Vojvoda – both of whom staged fine recoveries after poor starts.

Since 2017 Barcelona of Ecuador are the only club from outside the big two to reach the semi-finals, a feat they have achieved twice. This year, though, they fell in the qualifying rounds. Their Guayaquil rivals Emelec are still alive, saving themselves after a patchy campaign with a last-day 7-0 win over Bolivia's Independiente Petrolero. The final is set for Guayaquil on October 29, but it will be an enormous surprise if Emelec can fight their way through three knockout rounds to get there.

Much the same applies to the Paraguayan pair, Libertad and Cerro Porteno, neither of whom have ever got further than a semi-final. Fans of Cerro Porteno, though, can already be happy with their team's performance in this year's campaign. One of the highlights of the last week of the group phase was their traditional Asuncion derby against Olimpia. Cerro needed to avoid a two-goal defeat to book their place and eliminate their old rivals. Seldom has a 1-0 loss at home in a big derby been so celebrated.

Perhaps the most interesting "outsider" in the knockout phase is Tolima. Atletico Nacional of Colombia were the last side from outside Brazil and Argentina to win the trophy, back in 2016. Since then, Colombian sides have endured a dismal record in the competition. But Tolima, the country's best side in recent times, brought the dry run to an end, saving themselves with a famous last-day win away to Atletico Mineiro. It will be interesting to follow Tolima's progress in the knockout stages.

The Libertadores, then, has already ended for five of South America's ten nations; Bolivia, Chile and Uruguay have not managed to qualify a team for the last 16. Nor, for the sixth consecutive year, have Venezuela – or, for an extraordinary nine years in a row, have Peru. Indeed, the Peruvian pair of Alianza Lima and Sporting Cristal did not manage a single victory, and could only draw three of their 12 matches.

Manchester City-bound Julian Alvarez helped himself to six goals in one game against Alianza Lima of Peru

This highlights the importance of the Copa Sudamericana, the continent's Europa League equivalent. The competition struggles for space, forced to compete for attention with the far more important Libertadores. But the Sudamericana has the advantage of being more inclusive. The last 16 includes eight group winners, plus the eight teams who finished third in the Libertadores. And all ten countries still have a representative. The continent will be watching Brazil and Argentina in the Libertadores, but in the Sudamericana everyone still has a horse in the race.

Ones to watch... Colombian side Deportes Tolima

CAF Champions League

MARK GLEESON

Wydad Casablanca lift the trophy on home soil

Yet choice of host for final causes controversy

Wydad Casablanca won a third African Champions League as they ended a record-breaking bid by Egypt's Al Ahly in the final, and at the end of another tournament mangled by administrative machinations.

The choice of Casablanca to host the one-off final was clouded in Machiavellian deceit and proved another example of the Confederation of African Football shooting itself in the foot without provocation.

This was the third Champions League final to be decided at a neutral venue after CAF changed from the tried and tested format of two home-and-away legs in a bid to replicate the success of their UEFA equivalent.

But the contrast with Europe in terms of fan travel and resources are stark and bidding by African cities to host the final has not proven plentiful, in contrast to the wide array of options European football's controlling body have annually.

While UEFA decide on the venues of its European club competition finals well in advance, CAF left the decision until the Champions League was already at the semi-final stage – just three weeks before the final, when it was already clear that Al Ahly and Wydad would contest the final.

In a statement, CAF declared Morocco were the only football association to bid for the match after Senegal withdrew. A vote of the CAF executive committee gave it to Morocco despite the fact that there were two Casablanca teams in the Champions League while none from Senegal, making Dakar the perfect neutral venue.

Champions... Wydad captain Yahya Jabrane lifts the trophy

Predictably the Egyptians were up in arms about having to play the final in Wydad's back yard and quickly took the matter to the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport – but had their appeal dismissed.

"I suppose the powerful got what they wanted in the end," said a bitter and sarcastic Ahly coach Pitso Mosimane after his side lost 2-0 in the final, and in a reference to Morocco's considerable sway on the African game. Casablanca's Mohamed V stadium did deliver an extraordinary one-sided atmosphere with the 12th man factor proving considerable as Wydad won, thereby denying Ahly the distinction of becoming the first club to take the Champions League three years in a row.

As it is, the Cairo giants have won double the number of titles of their nearest challengers but their best efforts at extending their dominance on the African club game were undone by two moments of brilliance from Wydad's Zouhair El Moutaraji.

The 26-year-old attacker cut in at pace from the left wing before unleashing a cracking shot from well outside Ahly's penalty area to open the scoring in the 15th minute. He added the second goal with quick anticipation a minute into the second half, tucking home a rebound from close range as Al Ahly's defence were caught static. Guy Mbenza, the Congolese striker on loan to Wydad from Royal Antwerp in Belgium, also struck the woodwork but if this paints a picture of home dominance, the final proved anything but.

Instead, Al Ahly controlled more than 60 per cent of the possession but proved unable to penetrate the Wydad defence until late on when they suddenly had a handful of chances to get themselves back in the game and set up a grandstand finish. Wydad goalkeeper Reda Ahmed Tagnaouti made a vital stop to deny Percy Tau as the Moroccans held on for victory.

Sea of red...Wydad were well supported in front of their fans

"I think we merited the title," insisted Wydad's coach Walid Regragui, the French-born former Morocco international defender in his first season at the club. "We were strong in the group phase, eliminating Zamalek and we came through tough opponents in the knockout rounds too."

That might be exaggerating their progress to the winners' podium; they did score more goals than any other side in this season's competition but also avoided some of the other top challengers, who fell by the wayside.

South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns set a new group phase record of 16 out of a possible 18 points but then crashed to Angolan underdogs Petro Atletico in the last eight, tripping over their own self-confidence.

Similarly, Esperance of Tunisia were also expected to be a strong contender but lost a rare home game to Algeria's Entente Setif in the quarters and were also bundled out.

Ahly edged Raja Casablanca in their quarter-final tie amid some VAR controversy but in the semis reminded everyone of their strength by beating Setif 6-2 on aggregate.

Wydad were also far too strong for Petro and won 3-1 away in Luanda before a 1-1 home draw in the return as they set themselves up to emulate their previous successes in 1992 and 2017.

Predictably the Egyptians were up in arms about having to play the final in Wydad's back yard and quickly took the matter to the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport – but had their appeal dismissed

Bitter...Al Ahly coach Pitso Mosimane

Goal... Zouhair el-Moutaraji celebrates scoring in the final

CONCACAF

JAMES NALTON

Seattle Sounders bring Mexican dominance to an end

Brian Schmetzer's side overcome UNAM Pumas of Mexico to become first MLS side to win CONCACAF Champions League since 2000

The impressive Seattle skyline loomed in the background as a record crowd watched the Sounders make history in the CONCACAF Champions League. It was a grand scene for a grand achievement.

The Sounders became the first team from the United States to win CONCACAF club football's top honour since the tournament was renamed in 2008, defeating UNAM Pumas of Mexico City in a two-legged, home and away final. Prior to Seattle's triumph, Mexican teams had dominated the competition, winning the previous 16 continental titles and all 13 since it was reformatted. To put the achievement of Brian Schmetzer's side into perspective, the last club from the US to claim the region's biggest prize were LA Galaxy way back in 2000.

On paper, 2022 always looked like a good opportunity for Major League Soccer to interrupt Mexican clubs' dominance. Traditional Liga MX heavyweights Club America, Pachuca and defending champions Monterrey, plus 2020 champions Tigres UANL, all failed to qualify, while several MLS sides were coming into the tournament on the back of impressive campaigns.

But there was still a barrier for Seattle to overcome against Mexican opposition in the final, especially as it

CONCACAF champions... Seattle Sounders celebrate with the trophy

Match winners... Nicolas Lodeiro (L) celebrates with fellow goalscorer Raul Ruidiaz (R) and Obed Vargas

Dejected...Pumas defender Jose Galindo reacts during the second-leg defeat

was their first appearance at this stage of the competition. And when Pumas went 2-0 up thanks to a Juan Ignacio Dinenno brace in the first leg in Mexico City, there were worries this would be more of the same from MLS clubs in the final. But two late Nicolas Lodeiro penalties, the most dramatic of which came in the ninth minute of added time, restored parity.

LAFC and Canadian side Toronto FC have both fallen at the final hurdle in recent years, but the dramatic first leg made Seattle favourites to avoid a similar fate on home soil. Despite not claiming domestic honours last season – only qualifying for the Champions League via a third-place MLS finish – they are one of the more consistent and well-run teams in the league.

This was on show in their home city as they took the lead through Raul Ruidiaz in the second leg of the final, before ruthlessly sealing the win via goals from Ruidiaz and Lodeiro who cemented their status as club legends.

A Champions League record crowd of 68,741 at Lumen Field confirmed Seattle as one of the nation's biggest soccer cities, not that there was any doubting this beforehand. The stadium is in the running to host World Cup matches when the tournament takes place on the continent in 2026. On this evidence, it would be foolish not to have it involved.

Since entering MLS in 2009, then coached by the late Sigi Schmid, the Sounders have never failed to make the play-offs. The lowest they've finished in their conference is fourth.

In a league that attempts to promote parity and chances for every team to win titles, some clubs do need to be consistently good if they are to be a force on the continent and challenge the Mexican sides. Seattle, now with just their second-ever MLS head coach in Schmetzer, are one such team.

Other MLS candidates have the potential to join them at this level of consistency.

Despite exiting early in the post-season play-offs, New England Revolution had enjoyed a record-breaking regular season in 2021, claiming the MLS Supporters' Shield (league title) in style.

On paper, 2022 always looked like a good opportunity for Major League Soccer to interrupt Mexican clubs' dominance

Meanwhile, the eventual stars of the post-season play-offs and 2021 MLS Cup champions, New York City FC, appear on the verge of becoming a force regionally as well as domestically.

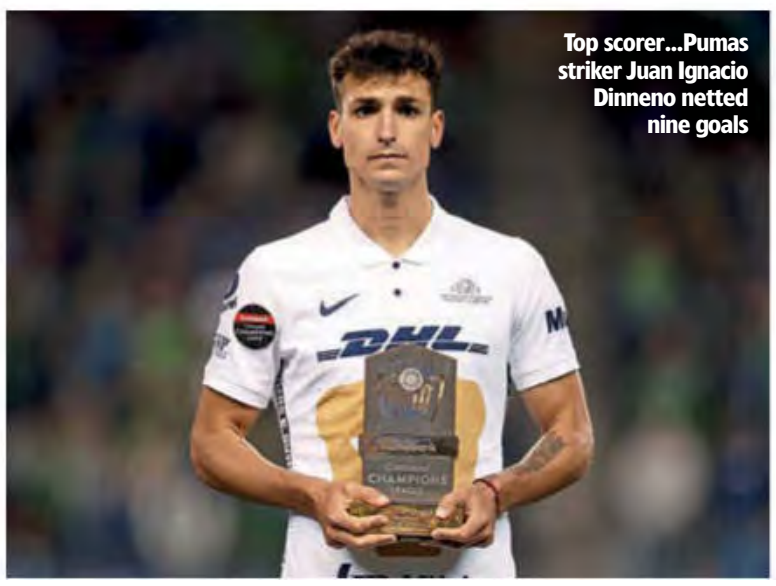
New England had a bye to the quarter-finals after Haitian side Cavaly couldn't work their way around visa issues, but the Massachusetts club encountered the same problems in knockout football as they did in last year's MLS play-offs, exiting at the hands of Pumas.

Having knocked out Colorado Rapids in the last 16, Guatemalan side Comunicaciones pushed NYCFC all the way in their quarter-final. The MLS side eventually advanced on away goals after a 5-5 aggregate draw, yet their 4-2 defeat in Guatemala City was perhaps an indication that the MLS outfit don't quite have what it takes to win this gruelling competition just yet, and they were knocked out by the Sounders in the semis.

Canada also got in on the act for a short time as CF Montreal defeated Mexicans Santos Laguna in the last 16, but were knocked out in the quarters by Cruz Azul.

Mexico's rather stodgy World Cup qualification and this ceding of their CONCACAF club crown to the United States may be a wake-up call, if they hadn't had one already. It wouldn't be a surprise to see an MLS side win the continental crown again next year.

The Sounders have made a disappointing start to their 2022 MLS campaign but can now focus on the league having become kings of the continent, ending years of Mexican dominance in what was a superb soccer spectacle in Seattle.



Top scorer...Pumas striker Juan Ignacio Dinneno netted nine goals

Argentina

JOEL RICHARDS

Boca find a way to win again

Buenos Aires giants win the Copa de la Liga Profesional despite not being at their best

To explain how and why his team had just booked their place in the final of Argentina's League Cup, 20-year-old midfielder Alan Varela put it simply. "Because we are Boca," he said holding back the tears, "the best."

Varela had just scored the decisive penalty against Racing Club in the semi-final shootout to set up a final against Tigre. It had been a rocky few months but Boca were finally pulling rank, as their history demands.

Varela and company would be crowned champions a few days later, running out 3-0 winners in the final with goals from veteran defender Marcos Rojo, a piledriver from Colombian left-back Frank Fabra and a routine header from 21-year-old centre-forward Luis Vazquez – the final flourish – to round off the victory.

This was Boca Juniors' 72nd official title. For coach Sebastian Battaglia, it was his 19th title with the club – counting his time in the dugout together with his role in midfield during Boca's golden era at the turn of the century. With it, he surpassed Guillermo Barros Schelotto as the club's most successful player/coach ever.

It was also a triumph for the club's board, a fourth title for the directors that took over in late 2019 and are guided by vice-president Juan Roman Riquelme. Yet the legendary former No.10 bemoaned how little credit he believes his club are afforded. "What Boca achieve is not given its real value," he claimed.

What is true is that behind the latest addition to the Bombonera trophy cabinet is a somewhat nuanced story. The debate over whether Boca really were the best side in the country rages on.

Young star... Alan Varela

Party time...Boca's players celebrate

The competition is split into a group and knockout phase, with four teams advancing from the two groups of 14.

In Zone 1, it was Fernando Gago's Racing Club that caught the eye. Many supporters had doubted Gago when he was appointed after a short and uneventful spell in charge of Aldosivi. But the former silky-skilled midfielder implanted a style of play in Avellaneda that won plaudits and, more importantly, won points. Racing were unbeaten in the league zone format. They lost on penalties to Boca in the semi-final after a goalless draw.

That disappointment was compounded by failure to qualify for the knockout phase of the Copa Sudamericana. Among the many positives, however, is the emergence of a maturing and improving 19-year-old Carlos Alcaraz, the midfielder adding goals to his game in this campaign.

In Zone 2 it was Estudiantes de la Plata who took first place ahead of Boca, but, like Racing, they would also go out on penalties in the knockout phase, this time against Argentinos Juniors in the quarter-finals.

Argentinos then lost their semi-final on penalties to Tigre, who are not one of the heavyweights in Argentine football. They returned to the top flight just this season after two years in the second tier. Yet under the guidance of Diego Martinez, and with the veteran and rookie midfielder partnership of Sebastian Prediger and Ezequiel Fernandez (on loan from Boca), the Matador reached the final.

In the quarter-finals Tigre saw off River Plate at the Monumental. It was in part thanks to a costly mistake by the Millionaires' Chilean international Paolo Diaz gifting the opportunity for Tigre's winner. River must now look ahead to life without Julian Alvarez. The striker is due to join up with Manchester City in the coming weeks, having signed earlier in the year. "The Spider" underlined what coach Marcelo Gallardo will miss with a six-goal personal haul in the final game of the Libertadores group stage against Alianza Lima of Peru.

So while Boca did not impress in the early stage of the competition, they held their nerve and came good at just the right moment. "Maybe there were other teams who played better than us tactically," said Boca's striker Dario "Pipa" Benedetto after the win over Tigre, "but we won the games we needed to win". The side rarely convinced in this campaign and faced pressure in the Copa Libertadores after early defeats in the group stage. Yet Battaglia's side won their last match to win the group. Youngster Varela, who scored the all-important goal for that win in the Libertadores, was one of the high points for the club.

> "Maybe there were other teams who played better than us tactically, but we won the games we needed to win"
>
> Boca Juniors striker Dario Benedetto

Veteran...Tigre midfielder and captain Sebastian Prediger

Yet Boca's victory is overshadowed by events off the pitch. Before the semi-final, forward Sebastian Villa was accused of sexually assaulting a woman in 2021, which he denies.

The case – which at the time of writing is still unfolding – stirred emotion and opinion. The alleged victim's testimony was leaked to local media while Villa continued playing.

Argentina is the country where a powerful movement of street mobilizations demanding justice for victims of domestic violence started and then spread across Latin America. Out of the 26 first-division sides, 14 have protocols in the event of domestic violence allegations. Boca are one of those clubs. "Villa should not have played the final," said former Boca and Argentina president Mauricio Macri, who, it should be noted, has been at odds with Riquelme since the early 2000s.

This tournament was another stopgap for Argentine football with a convoluted structure that had never been used before, and if recent history serves as a guide, will possibly not be repeated. The AFA continues to improvise and conjure up unique and eccentric formats to accommodate the 28 teams in top flight.

The new league season runs until October. Relegations – suspended since the onset of the pandemic – are back. The winners will face Boca Juniors in the Champions Cup in November.

Impressive... Racing manager Fernando Gago

Mexico

MARTIN DEL PALACIO LANGER

Two in a row for Atlas

Title drought well and truly over for the Guadalajara-based side after extraordinary run to the Clausura final

There is nothing more exciting for a club fan than to see their team breaking a curse – to leave behind a drought without titles and finally celebrate a victory on the most important of occasions. But when a second championship arrives, the feeling is different. It's the certainty that the drought is over once and for all and that the good times are here to stay.

That's how Atlas supporters feel, the same ones who suffered for 70 years the ridicule of the rest of the Mexican fans and who, just six months after having won their first title in those seven decades, are celebrating again, having won two titles in a row for the first time in the club's long history.

Although it wasn't as unexpected as the first championship, no one was really predicting a repeat for the *Rojinegros*. Firstly because, since the implementation of the short tournaments every six months in 1996, only two teams had managed to be crowned twice in a row, and never in a football year – Pumas did it in 2004 and Leon in 2014 – and secondly because Atlas do not have the most expensive squad in Mexican football, nor the most talented players.

That title was shared by Tigres – who had added more national team players to their squad, already full of Latin

Ecstatic...Atlas' Luis Reyes celebrates scoring in the final

Semi-final hat-trick hero... Andre-Pierre Gignac

Chaotic...Tigres' keeper Nahuel Guzman was sent off in the semi-final

American and French internationals, Venezuelan Jefferson Soteldo and the Mexicans Jesus Angulo and Sebastian Cordova – and their city neighbours Monterrey, who had signed another Mexican international, Luis Romo.

However, both teams, and the other two favourites, America and Cruz Azul from Mexico City, fell short in a tournament in which the individual talent of the richer teams took a back seat to Atlas' teamwork and the intelligence of their manager Diego Cocca.

At no time was that clearer than in the semi-final, in which the *Rojinegros* faced Tigres, with their international stars and their coach, the flamboyant former Mexico manager Miguel Herrera.

In the first leg, Atlas, aware of the offensive power of their rivals, bet on patience, and took advantage of the spaces left for the counter-attack. In a display of practicality and punch, they took an unexpected 3-0 lead with goals from Julio Furch, Luis Reyes and Julian Quinones, which seemed to define the tie.

But Tigres were not dead, and in front of 42,500 spectators at the Estadio Universitario, both teams starred in the craziest match in Mexican soccer in a long time.

After 45 minutes, it seemed that everything was decided. Quinones had scored again for Atlas and the aggregate score was already 4-0. But then Gignac arrived. The Frenchman showed that, at 36 years old, he is still the best player in the LigaMX and with a hat-trick in 20 minutes, he returned Tigres to the tie. When Lichnovsky made it 4-1, it seemed to have sealed the most incredible comeback in recent memory.

Then, with just three minutes of added time remaining and the grandstand celebrating in advance, Atlas captain Aldo Rocha was knocked down in the box by Angulo and, after a review of several minutes, the referee decided to award a penalty.

What followed was farcical. Tigres' goalkeeper, Nahuel Guzman, interrupted the game for several minutes between tears and complaints to the referee, and was sent off for putting two balls on the pitch after Rocha scored the winning goal from the penalty spot.

The worst part is that none of this really mattered. Herrera, in his eagerness to come back from the deficit, had forgotten the regulations and brought in nine foreign players, one more than the authorised limit, so, in practice, the final result was 2-0 for Atlas.

In front of 42,500 spectators at the Estadio Universitario, both teams starred in the craziest match in Mexican soccer in a long time

After the drama of the semi-final, the decisive duel pitted the *Rojinegros* against Pachuca, a team with good young players, led by the excellent Uruguayan coach Guillermo Almada, who had finished in first place in the regular season.

However, Atlas' experience was too much for the *Tuzos*. In the first leg, despite being dominated at home for a good part of the match, the *Rojinegros* took a 2-0 lead. And in the second leg they survived an initial onslaught from Pachuca, keeping their cool despite being down 2-1 in the first half, to keep a clean sheet in the second and win their second consecutive championship. Even their most loyal fans would not have dreamed of seeing this level of success, after growing up seeing their parents and grandparents suffer year after year. The curse, it seems, has undoubtedly now been lifted.

Two in a row...Atlas players celebrate with the trophy

Australia

SIMON HILL

Review

Caption

Winners... Western United players lift the A-League trophy

Western United lift the trophy

John Aloisi's side defy the odds to win their first major title

A season of transition for the A-League perhaps ended in the most apt fashion – a first championship success for an expansion club still finding its feet in professional football.

Western United, just four years old, and much derided for their rather generic name (they were originally named Western Melbourne, where the team is based), small fanbase, and the nomadic nature of their nascent existence. Already in their short life, they have utilised six home grounds as they wait for their much-anticipated boutique stadium to be built.

Some doubt whether it ever will be, given it was supposed to be ready for this season. As yet, not a single brick has been laid at the proposed site in Wyndham.

But there is no doubt that under John Aloisi the building blocks were in place for success on the pitch at least. After missing the finals last season, Aloisi replaced Mark Rudan as coach, and recruited superbly.

Imports Aleksandar Prijovic (who got 13 goals, including one in the Grand Final win over Melbourne City, and six assists), Leo Lacroix, and to an extent, Rene Krhin, made big contributions. As did Australian signings, Jamie Young, who kept 12 clean sheets, Neil Kilkenny, who kept things ticking over in midfield, and Ben Garuccio, whose scorpion kick goal against Western Sydney Wanderers during the regular season drew worldwide attention.

Western were far too savvy for reigning champions Melbourne City in the Grand Final. Their 2-0 win in front of over 22,000 fans supplemented a

Victorious... manager John Aloisi celebrates the victory

jaw-dropping demolition of Melbourne Victory in the semi at the same venue the week before, providing a positive end to what was a rather troubled campaign for the league in general.

Those problems were plentiful. The clubs took control of the league for the first time after winning a power battle with Football Australia, but found the going tough. The new TV streaming service had major teething problems, and when the Omicron variant wave hit Australia in December, some 88 games had to be postponed, as players succumbed to the virus in droves. Matches were rescheduled on an increasingly ad hoc basis, leaving fans confused and the narrative largely lost.

The finals series, however, saved the day.

Western were far too savvy for the reigning champions, Melbourne City, in the Grand Final

Melbourne Victory were many peoples' favourites to lift a fifth crown after last year's wooden spoonists enjoyed a remarkable recovery under serial winner, Tony Popovic. Victory lifted the Australia Cup, and finished second on the back of a 15-match unbeaten run, before they fell in spectacular fashion to Western in the semis. Midfielder Jake Brimmer earned some consolation in being named the Johnny Warren Medallist – the player of the season.

The Premiership went to Melbourne City for the second season in succession – but their bid to become the first team to win back-to-back Premierships & Championships foundered in the Grand Final. Paddy Kisnorbo's team lost form just at the wrong moment, in part due to their Asian Champions League exertions, where they remained undefeated in six group games, but still failed to progress to the knockout phase.

Elsewhere, Adelaide United did well to finish fourth in the face of an injury crisis that forced manager Carl Veart to utilise a dozen different central defensive partnerships.

The Reds, along with Central Coast Mariners, drew plaudits for unearthing several eye-catching young talents, particularly from the African diaspora. Nestory Irankunda (Adelaide) and Garang Kuol (Mariners) especially, are rare gems who are set for bigger things and still only 16 & 17 respectively. Kuol's cameo against Barcelona for the A-League All Stars will have European scouts queuing up.

Wellington Phoenix finished sixth, an admirable achievement to make the finals in a season when COVID again forced them to play almost the entire season in exile in Australia.

But it was a disappointing season for New South Wales, with only the Mariners flying the state flag in the finals. Macarthur – for whom Dwight Yorke will coach next season – led the competition early, but fell away to finish seventh. Sydney, the dominant force of recent years, endured a miserable campaign to finish eighth.

Newcastle Jets played some eye-catching football but were wildly inconsistent, while Western Sydney Wanderers missed out on the play-offs for the fifth year in a row. Brisbane Roar only avoided the wooden spoon thanks to Perth Glory's "annus horribilis", as they were forced to play half the season away from Western Australia, due to the government's COVID regulations. Their experiment with Daniel Sturridge as a marquee was a failure, with the former England international making only a handful of appearances in another injury-tainted campaign.

An off-season of introspection awaits as the league attempts to learn from this year's failings. The product is good, but remains largely invisible to the public. Western deserve credit for being the best team – but, as ever, the trick remains getting enough people to care in the face of opposition from the other codes, and the ever-popular English Premier League.

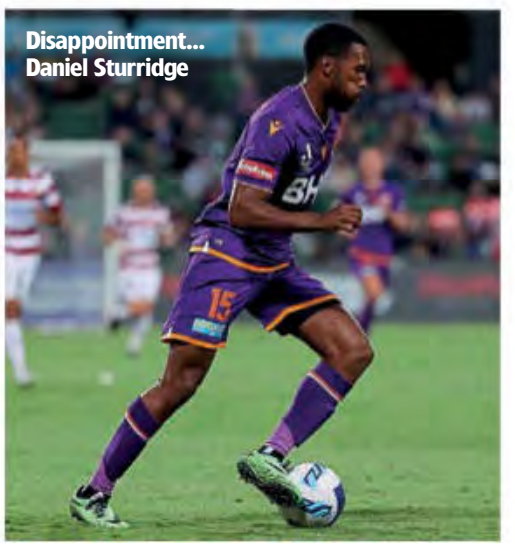
SEASON'S BEST

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
Jake Brimmer
(Melbourne Victory)
The 24-year-old midfielder got seven goals and seven assists as he became the first Australian to be crowned the A-League Men's best player in seven years, and the youngest since Mark Viduka was winner in 1995.

COACH OF THE SEASON
John Aloisi
(Western United)
The former Socceroos striker overcame the odds to guide Western United to the A-League title, the first honour of his career after previous spells in charge of Melbourne Heart and, more recently, Brisbane Roar.

RISING STAR
Garang Kuol
(Central Coast Mariners)
The 17-year-old Egyptian forward only made his A-League debut in April, and went on to score four goals in his first seven matches.

Player of the Year... Jake Brimmer



Disappointment... Daniel Sturridge

CONCACAF

STEVE MENARY

Nations League kick-off

2022-23 campaign gives match opportunities to lowly-ranked CONCACAF sides

Competing... Montserrat v El Salvador at the last Nations League

The first edition of the CONCACAF Nations League produced one of the most dramatic finals that any competition has seen in recent years, as USA and Mexico served up a five-goal thriller in Denver in 2020. Christian Pulisic netted the winning penalty in extra-time for the home side to seal the inaugural trophy, yet, for the vast majority of the teams involved, simply taking part was the reward.

In Europe, the Nations League was partly introduced to stop teams playing meaningless friendlies. But in the CONCACAF region, the introduction of the tournament was for totally different reasons.

Some members barely played at all, with national associations unwilling to divert funds into playing games that inevitably produced one-sided encounters and humbling defeats. The Nations League changed all that.

"It's brilliant for the small countries," says Willie Donachie, the former Scotland international who now manages Montserrat. "We wouldn't have played for two years without FIFA and CONCACAF."

Egbert Lacle, president of the Aruba Football Federation, agrees that regular games are the main benefit. He says: "Since the first edition [in 2019-20], we could finally start considering our national team as an integral part of the association, because finally the team is guaranteed a minimum of four matches a year."

With small groups predominantly of just three teams, there are fine margins between promotion and relegation; every match and point counts in the Nations League, which also serves as a qualifier for the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

At the top, the quartet of top seeds – Mexico, Costa Rica, Canada and the USA – will be expected to comfortably advance from their respective groups to the four-team finals in June 2023, though this competition is of secondary

Holders...USA won the 2019-20 edition thanks to Christian Pulisic

Regular games... Dominica versus Nicaragua

Focus elsewhere... Costa Rica will be prioritising World Cup qualification

importance to the World Cup.

Costa Rica in particular will view their opening fixtures against Panama and Martinique as preparation for their inter-confederational qualifier against New Zealand, while USA and Mexico played friendlies against opponents from South America and Africa prior to kick-off to help them prepare for Qatar.

For those at the bottom of the rankings though, thoughts of the World Cup are nothing but a pipe dream.

The gap between the top and the bottom in this region is massive; out of the six regional confederations, CONCACAF has the largest contingent of full members left outside of FIFA. The Dutch islands of Bonaire and Sint Maarten and the French overseas territories of Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana and Saint Martin are all stuck in limbo and unable to enter World Cup qualifying.

> "It's brilliant for the small countries. We wouldn't have played for two years without FIFA and CONCACAF"
>
> Montserrat head coach Willie Donachie

With no Caribbean Cup staged since 2017, and no sign of the competition reappearing, the Nations League is particularly important to those islands that have not been able to progress to FIFA membership.

"For our federation, it is a very important competition," says Philippe Briot from the Guadeloupean League of Football. "Even if we are not yet a federation recognised by FIFA, we are part of CONCACAF like the other federations. We are preparing for these major meetings like the other federations."

The Gold Cup offered an outlet for some of these territories, such as 2007 semi-finalists Guadeloupe and Martinique, who qualified for the 2021 finals. Smaller, less competitive islands like Sint Maarten did not enter and, as a result, barely played any senior internationals.

The Nations League has now changed all that. Although taking part in international competitions can be expensive, CONCACAF has used money from the $10 million FIFA Forward programme to help those teams lacking FIFA memberships funds to cover travel expenses and participate.

The competition also offers a route to the Gold Cup. A place in the preliminary qualifying stage is on offer for each of the bottom teams in League A groups, the four runners-up from the League B groups and the four League C winners.

For any of the latter nations, reaching the Gold Cup finals would be a tall order, but simply playing games that can be won is the benefit. "All the islands in the Caribbean that people have never heard of want to do well at football. It's a great experience," adds Donachie.

Preview

THE DRAW

LEAGUE A

GROUP A
- Jamaica
- Mexico
- Suriname

GROUP B
- Costa Rica
- Martinique
- Panama

GROUP C
- Canada
- Curacao
- Honduras

GROUP D
- El Salvador
- Grenada
- United States

LEAGUE B

GROUP A
- Antigua & Barbuda
- Barbados
- Cuba
- Guadeloupe

GROUP B
- Bermuda
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Montserrat

GROUP C
- Bahamas
- Nicaragua
- St. Vincent & Grenadines
- Trinidad & Tobago

GROUP D
- Belize
- Dominican Republic
- French Guiana
- Guatemala

LEAGUE C

GROUP A
- Bonaire
- Sint Maarten
- Turks & Caicos Islands
- US Virgin Islands

GROUP B
- Aruba
- Saint Martin
- St. Kitts & Nevis

GROUP C
- Anguilla
- Dominica
- St. Lucia

GROUP D
- British Virgin Islands
- Cayman Islands
- Puerto Rico

Asia

JOHN DUERDEN

Preview

Confident...India will play all of their games in Kolkata

Asian Cup qualifying

Eleven places are up for grabs as the road to the 2023 edition concludes

Compared to much of the rest of the world, qualification for major events in Asia tends to be more complex. Qualifying for the 2022 World Cup, for example, started back in June 2019 and finished almost three years later. In some ways, it has not really finished at all because the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) decided to merge the road to Qatar 2022 with qualification to the 2023 Asian Cup.

It means that all 12 teams that reached the final stage of World Cup qualification have already booked their spots for the continental competition: Japan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Australia, Oman, Vietnam, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and United Arab Emirates. China complete the dozen, originally as hosts, but they announced in mid-May that they would forfeit hosting rights for the tournament due to the country's "Zero-COVID" policy (at the time of writing, new hosts had yet to be annnounced, with Japan reportedly the early frontrunners). Completing the field of already-qualified nations are Qatar, who were assured of a place as defending champions.

That leaves 11 places up for grabs and these will be filled in June as 24 teams are divided into six groups of four. The group winners qualify along with five of the six best runners-up. There are no home and away ties; each group is a round-robin event with all games taking place in one venue, which will obviously help some more than others.

Group A will be held in Kuwait with Jordan the favourites to take top spot. The two West Asian teams finished with the same number of points in World Cup qualification, although organisers would probably prefer that Indonesia, with a football-mad population of over 270 million, make it instead. The "*Merah Putih*" have been making strides of late and, with a young team, reached the final of the AFF Championship, Southeast Asia's regional tournament, in December. Playing in West Asia makes that less likely even though they should finish above Nepal, who will hope that the local knowledge of their Kuwaiti coach Abdullah Al Mutairi makes a difference.

Football-crazy nation...Indonesia have an outside chance in Group A

Southeast Asian champs...Thailand have high hopes of qualification

It looks a little more open in Group B. Mongolia are a continental minnow but playing in Ulaanbaatar should give them a chance at least. Palestine, Philippines and Yemen all made the 2019 edition and all have ambitions of doing so again. Yemen barely play these days due to the civil war at home but a temporary ceasefire provides optimism, as has a training camp in Saudi Arabia. The Philippines have been boosted by the women qualifying for the 2023 World Cup and there is growing international experience in the team. Palestine are going for a third successive appearance.

Eleven places are up for grabs and these will be filled in June as 24 teams are divided into six groups of four. The group winners qualify along with five of the six best runners-up

Uzbekistan are the favourites in Group C and usually aim not just to get to the Asian Cup but to progress to the latter stages once there. There is something of a changing of the guard in the Central Asian powerhouse but, with home advantage, the White Wolves will surely be too strong for the Maldives and Sri Lanka. Southeast Asian champions Thailand will also expect to pick up enough points to qualify.

Group H favourites... Kyrgyzstan's record scorer Mirlan Murzayev

Group D sees hosts India full of confidence as all the games are taking place in Kolkata, the spiritual football home of the subcontinent. Hong Kong will be looking to take the runners-up spot and will be boosted by sending a team through to the Asian Champions League knockout round for the first time in April. Afghanistan's preparations have been disrupted by the political situation at home as the Taliban returned to power in August. Cambodia, managed by Keisuke Honda, have the passion at home but despite a number of talented players, qualification will be a surprise.

Kuala Lumpur hosts Group E, which gives Malaysia a chance of appearing at the tournament for the first time since 2007 when they were co-hosts. Bahrain are regular participants on the continental stage and made the last 16 in 2019, only to lose to South Korea after extra-time. Turkmenistan are one of the most improved teams in Asia in recent years and only narrowly missed out on the final round of World Cup qualification. Bangladesh will be delighted to avoid finishing fourth.

Kyrgyzstan are perhaps favourites to win Group F, not least because they will be at home. The Central Asians made the knockout stages in 2019 and will be tested by regional rivals Tajikistan. Singapore's football scene has been looking more positive of late with the performances of Lion City Sailors in the Asian Champions League and more players heading overseas. They should have enough to finish above Southeast Asian rivals Myanmar, who have struggled for games internationally and at home due to political and security issues, but it will be tough to finish in the top two.

THE DRAW

GROUP A
- Indonesia
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Nepal

GROUP B
- Mongolia
- Palestine
- Philippines
- Yemen

GROUP C
- Maldives
- Sri Lanka
- Thailand
- Uzbekistan

GROUP D
- Afghanistan
- Cambodia
- Hong Kong
- India

GROUP E
- Bahrain
- Bangladesh
- Malaysia
- Turkmenistan

GROUP F
- Kyrgyzstan
- Myanmar
- Singapore
- Tajikistan

Lesotho

STEVE MENARY

Homeless Lesotho face uncertain future

With no national stadium that meets FIFA standards, Lesotho have been forced to play in South Africa

Lesotho skipper... Tshwarelo Bereng
Photo credit: LFA

Lesotho's 2023 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying programme promises to be an arduous affair as the southern African nation is likely to have to play all six matches away from home.

Lesotho have been drawn in Group H with Ivory Coast, Zambia and Comoros after beating the Seychelles in the preliminary round. Both of those games had to be played at neutral venues as neither side had a ground that meets FIFA's stadia rules.

Seychelles hosted Lesotho in Mauritius for the first leg, which finished 0-0. The return was at the Dobsonville Stadium in Soweto where Lesotho won 3-1 with a brace from Katleho Makateng and a goal from Sera Motebang.

The win was a positive start for Serbian Veselin Jelusic, who beat more than 100 other applicants to the Lesotho job in February and faces some huge challenges. Lesotho did not win a single game in the last AFCON qualifiers despite playing at home in Maseru. This time around, there are unlikely to be any home games.

LFA deputy secretary general Chris Bullock explains: "As it stands, there is no chance of us playing at home. The government is not in a position to renovate our national stadium, which doesn't meet FIFA requirements."

In 2020, a 2.4 billion Rand (just over £120 million) project to build a new national stadium, indoor sports arena and athletes village for Lesotho collapsed after the government cancelled controversial loans to a South African company to deliver the project.

> "As it stands, there is no chance of us playing at home"
> Chris Bullock, Lesotho Football Association

The Setsoto Stadium in Maseru can accommodate 20,000 fans but needs upgrading, which means that Lesotho are likely to have to continue playing in Soweto. Playing there will have consequences on and off the pitch.

"It's a five-six hour drive to the Dobsonville Stadium and that will affect the number of supporters that can come, if they can come at all," adds Bullock.

"There's a lot of costs involved and if the government do not renovate the stadium by next March, we will have three games in South Africa in addition to the three away qualifying games. That might affect whether we enter COSAFA [Council of Southern Africa Football Associations] or CHAN [Africa Nations Championship]."

Withdrawing from either or both tournaments to focus on the 2023 AFCON qualifiers would be a major blow. The COSAFA tournament is due to be held in Durban from July 5-17, while the next CHAN – a tournament exclusively for African-based players – has been delayed until January 2023, though qualifying will need to take place this year.

Lesotho's largely home-based squad would stand a better chance of winning matches in the latter. Jelusic has only a handful of overseas players – striker Masoabi Nkoto currently plays in Georgia for Merani Martvilli and forward Thabiso Brown is in Bolivia with Aurora – with neighbouring South Africa the main destination for players from Lesotho.

Captain Tshwarelo Bereng plays for Marumo Gallants and striker Motebang joined Lamontville Golden Arrows.

As things stand, South Africa is also likely to be a home for Jelusic's team as Lesotho strive to meet the demands of international participation.

Temporary home...the Dobsonville Stadium in Soweto

JUNE 10-JULY 9

Global diary

Games and dates to pencil in for the month ahead

(All kick-off times, if stated, are BST)

Friday June 10

EUROPE: The Nations League continues, with Austria v France and Denmark v Croatia the standout fixtures.
KOSOVO: England's Under-21s travel to Kosovo for a qualifying match for the European Championship. The remaining qualifiers take place over the following week, ahead of next year's finals.

Saturday June 11

EUROPE: England's clash with Italy will take place behind closed doors at Molineux Stadium as a punishment for fan disorder at the Euro 2020 final. Elsewhere, Republic of Ireland take on Scotland and Hungary face Germany.
AUSTRALIA: Brazil take on Argentina in a friendly at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Sunday June 12

EUROPE: Switzerland take on Portugal and Spain face Czech Republic, while Scandinavian neighbours Norway and Sweden also meet.

World Cup hopefuls...Peru

Monday June 13

EUROPE: France v Croatia tops the billing in the penultimate day of Nations League clashes.
QATAR: Peru face the winners of Australia and UAE for a place at the World Cup finals in Qatar.

Tuesday June 14

EUROPE: The summer's Nations League fixtures come to an end, with England v Hungary, Germany v Italy, Netherlands v Wales and Poland v Belgium the standout fixtures.
ASIA: The third round of Asian Cup qualifying concludes, with the six group winners progressing to the finals and the runners-up taking part in the play-offs.
QATAR: In the other World Cup intercontinental play-off match, Costa Rica face New Zealand.

Rematch... England and Italy meet for the first time since last summer's Euro 2020 final

Wednesday June 15

CONCACAF: In the CONCACAF Nations League, Jamaica take on Mexico and El Salvador face USA.

Thursday June 16

WOMEN: England Women take on Belgium at Molineux in preparation for this summer's European Championship.

Saturday June 18

SLOVAKIA: The UEFA Under-19 Championship begins, with hosts Slovakia facing France and Italy taking on Romania.

Sunday June 19

UZBEKISTAN: The final of the AFC Under-23 Asian Cup takes place.

Friday June 24

WOMEN: England boss Sarina Wiegman's preparations for Euro 2022 continue by taking on her old team Netherlands in a friendly at Elland Road. Meanwhile, Ukraine face Scotland in a World Cup qualifier.

Molineux...Wolves' ground will host England's men and women

Tuesday June 28

SLOVAKIA: The two semi-finals of the UEFA European Under-19 Championships take place.

Thursday June 30

WOMEN: In their final friendly before the Euros, England travel to Zurich to face Switzerland.

Friday July 1

SLOVAKIA: The final of the European Under-19 Championships takes place in Trnava.
PARAGUAY: The Apertura phase of the season concludes, followed by a two-week break before the Clausura begins.

Saturday July 2

WOMEN: The Africa Women Cup of Nations begins with hosts Morocco facing Burkina Faso.
COLOMBIA: The Clausura phase of the Colombian top flight gets underway.
PERU: The Apertura league season concludes.
ECUADOR: The second round of the Ecuadorian league season also gets underway.

Wednesday July 6

WOMEN: The Women's European Championship begins with England v Austria at Old Trafford.

Holders... Euro 2017 champions Netherlands

Thursday July 7

WOMEN: In the other match in Group A, Norway face Northern Ireland in Southampton.

Friday July 8

WOMEN: Group B kicks off with Spain v Finland and Germany v Denmark.

Saturday July 9

WOMEN: Group C of the Euros begins with Portugal v Switzerland and Netherlands v Sweden.

Club Football

EUROPE

2021-22 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Semi-Finals – 1st leg

April 26 – Manchester
Manchester City 4 (De Bruyne 2, Gabriel Jesus 11, Foden 53, Bernardo Silva 74)
Real Madrid 3 (Benzema 33, 82 pen, Vinicius Junior 55)

April 27 – Liverpool
Liverpool 2 (Estupinan 53 og, Mane 55)
Villarreal 0

Semi-Finals – 2nd leg

May 3 – Villarreal
Villarreal 2 (Dia 3, Coquelin 41)
Liverpool 3 (Fabinho 62, Diaz 67, Mane 74)
Liverpool win 5-2 on aggregate

May 4 – Madrid
Real Madrid 3 (Rodrygo 90, 90+1, Benzema 95 pen)
Manchester City 1 (Mahrez 73)
AET. Real Madrid win 6-5 on aggregate

2021-22 UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

Semi-Finals – 1st leg

April 28 – Leipzig
RB Leipzig 1 (Angelino 85)
Rangers 0

April 28 – London
West Ham United 1 (Antonio 21)
Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Knauff 1, Kamada 54)

Semi-Finals – 2nd leg

May 5 – Glasgow
Rangers 3 (Tavernier 19, Kamara 24, Lundstram 81)
RB Leipzig 1 (Nkunku 71)
Rangers win 3-2 on aggregate

May 5 – Frankfurt
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Santos Borre 26)
West Ham United 0
Eintracht Frankfurt win 3-1 on aggregate

2021-22 UEFA EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Semi-Finals – 1st leg

April 28 – Leicester
Leicester City 1 (Mancini 67 og)
Roma 1 (Pellegrini 15)

April 28 – Rotterdam
Feyenoord 3 (Dessers 18, 46, Sinisterra 20)
Marseille 2 (Dieng 28, Gerson 40)

Semi-Finals – 2nd leg

May 5 – Rome
Roma 1 (Abraham 11)
Leicester City 0
Roma win 2-1 on aggregate

May 5 – Marseille
Marseille 0
Feyenoord 0
Feyenoord win 3-2 on aggregate

2021-22 FA CUP

Final

May 14 – Wembley
Chelsea 0
Liverpool 0
AET. Liverpool win 6-5 on penalties

2021-22 EFL PLAY-OFFS

Championship

Semi-Finals – 1st leg

May 13 – Luton
Luton Town 1 (Bradley 30)
Huddersfield Town 1 (Sinani 12)

May 14 – Sheffield
Sheffield United 1 (Berge 90+1)
Nottingham Forest 2 (Colback 10, Johnson 71)

Semi-Finals – 2nd leg

May 16 – Huddersfield
Huddersfield Town 1 (Rhodes 82)
Luton Town 0
Huddersfield Town win 2-1 on aggregate

May 17 – Nottingham
Nottingham Forest 1 (Johnson 19)
Sheffield United 2 (Gibbs-White 47, Fleck 75)
AET. 3-3 on aggregate.
Nottingham Forest win 3-2 on penalties

Final

May 29 – Wembley
Huddersfield Town 0
Nottingham Forest 1 (Colwill 43 og)

League One

Semi-Finals – 1st leg

May 5 – Wycombe
Wycombe Wanderers 2 (Tafazolli 38, Vokes 82)
MK Dons 0

May 6 – Sunderland
Sunderland 1 (Stewart 45+1)
Sheffield Wednesday 0

Semi-Finals – 2nd leg

May 8 – Milton Keynes
MK Dons 1 (Parrott 26)
Wycombe Wanderers 0
Wycombe Wanderers win 2-1 on aggregate

May 9 – Sheffield
Sheffield Wednesday 1 (Gregory 74)
Sunderland 1 (Roberts 90+3)
Sunderland win 2-1 on aggregate

Final

May 21 – Wembley
Sunderland 2 (Embleton 12, Stewart 79)
Wycombe Wanderers 0

League Two

Semi-Finals – 1st leg

May 14 – Mansfield
Mansfield Town 2 (Oates 13, Bowery 32)
Northampton Town 1 (Koiki 61)

May 15 – Swindon
Swindon Town 2 (McKirdy 26, 68)
Port Vale 1 (Wilson 83)

Semi-Finals – 2nd leg

May 18 – Northampton
Northampton Town 0
Mansfield Town 1 (McLaughlin 32)
Mansfield Town win 3-1 on aggregate

May 19 – Burslem
Port Vale 1 (Wilson 8)
Swindon Town 0
AET. 2-2 on aggregate. Port Vale win 6-5 on penalties

Final

May 28 – Wembley
Mansfield Town 0
Port Vale 3 (Harratt 20, Wilson 24, Benning 85)

2021-22 FRENCH CUP

Final

May 7 – Saint-Denis
Nice 0
Nantes 1 (Blas 47 pen)

2021-22 GERMAN CUP

Final

May 21 – Berlin
Freiburg 1 (Eggestein 19)
RB Leipzig 1 (Nkunku 76)
AET. RB Leipzig win 4-2 on penalties

2021-22 ITALIAN CUP

Final

May 11 – Rome
Juventus 2 (Alex Sandro 50, Vlahovic 52)
Internazionale 4 (Barella 6, Calhanoglu 80 pen, Perisic 99 pen, 102)
After Extra-Time

2021-22 PORTUGUESE CUP

Final

May 22 – Oeiras
Porto 3 (Taremi 22 pen, 74, Vitinha 52)
Tondela 1 (Borges 73)

2021-22 SCOTTISH CUP

Final

May 21 – Glasgow
Rangers 2 (Jack 94, Wright 97)
Hearts 0
After Extra-Time

Final Tables 2021-22

ALBANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tirana (C)	36	22	7	7	64	27	73
Laci	36	18	9	9	52	33	63
Partizani Tirana	36	15	13	8	52	30	58
Kukesi	36	15	10	11	50	44	55
Vllaznia Shkoder	36	13	16	7	47	38	55
Teuta Durres	36	13	11	12	39	44	50
Kastrioti Kruje	36	13	4	19	30	54	43
Egnatia Rrogozhine*	36	8	11	17	30	49	35
Dinamo Tirana (R)	36	6	11	19	21	46	29
Skenderbeu Korce (R)	36	4	14	18	23	43	26

*Egnatia Rrogozhine enter the relegation play-off

ANDORRA

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter Club d'Escaldes (C)	27	14	8	5	54	24	50
UE Santa Coloma	27	13	8	6	37	26	47
Sant Julia	27	12	10	5	41	30	46
Atletic Club d'Escaldes	27	11	10	6	44	30	43

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Santa Coloma	27	15	7	5	64	34	52
Ordino	27	7	6	14	30	49	27
Engordany*	27	5	5	17	29	55	20
Carroi (R)	27	3	2	22	22	73	11

*Engordany enter the relegation play-off

ARMENIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pyunik (C)	32	23	6	3	52	25	75
Ararat-Armenia	32	23	5	4	56	20	74
Alashkert	32	14	9	9	38	30	51
Ararat	32	13	7	12	47	36	46
Urartu	32	9	13	10	37	32	40
Noah	32	9	12	11	38	43	39
Noravank	32	7	7	18	36	55	28
Van	32	6	7	19	19	47	25
BKMA*	32	4	6	22	25	60	18
Sevan** (R)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*BKMA enter the relegation play-off
**Sevan expelled from the league

AUSTRIA

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Bull Salzburg (C)	32	25	5	2	77	19	52
Sturm Graz	32	16	8	8	62	46	37
Austria Vienna	32	11	13	8	44	39	29
Wolfsberger AC	32	14	5	13	48	53	28
Rapid Vienna	32	10	11	11	48	45	25
Austria Klagenfurt	32	8	12	12	43	57	21

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
WSG Tirol	32	10	10	12	46	58	28
LASK	32	9	12	11	44	42	26
Rheindorf Altach	32	7	8	17	24	49	22
Ried	32	8	13	11	40	54	22
Hartberg	32	7	12	13	43	47	22
Admira (R)	32	6	13	13	36	46	21

Conference League Play-Offs

Semi-Final

May 23: WSG Tirol 2-1 LASK

Final

May 26: WSG Tirol 1-2 Rapid Vienna
May 29: Rapid Vienna 2-0 WSG Tirol (agg 4-1)

AZERBAIJAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Qarabag (C)	28	21	6	1	72	13	69
Neftci Baku	28	15	5	8	42	31	50
Zira	28	13	8	7	33	27	47
Gabala	28	12	9	7	38	34	45
Sabah	28	12	5	11	42	34	41
Sumgayit	28	5	7	16	22	46	22
Shamakhi	28	5	7	16	25	49	22
Sabail	28	4	3	21	17	57	15

BELGIUM

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Union Saint-Gilloise	34	24	5	5	78	27	77
Club Brugge	34	21	9	4	72	37	72
Anderlecht	34	18	10	6	72	36	64
Antwerp	34	19	6	9	55	38	63
Gent	34	18	8	8	56	30	62
Sporting Charleroi	34	15	9	10	55	46	54
Mechelen	34	15	7	12	57	61	52
Genk	34	15	6	13	66	47	51
Sint-Truiden	34	15	6	13	42	40	51
Cercle Brugge	34	12	9	13	49	46	45
OH Leuven	34	10	11	13	47	58	41
KV Oostende	34	10	7	17	34	61	37
Kortrijk	34	9	10	15	43	48	37
Standard Liege	34	9	9	16	32	51	36
AS Eupen	34	8	8	18	37	61	32
Zulte Waregem	34	8	8	18	42	69	32
RFC Seraing*	34	8	4	22	30	68	28
Beerschot (R)	34	4	4	26	33	76	16

*RFC Seraing won the relegation play-off

Play-Off I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge (C)	6	4	2	0	8	2	50
Union Saint-Gilloise	6	2	1	3	5	5	46
Anderlecht	6	2	2	2	8	7	40
Antwerp	6	1	1	4	3	10	36

Play-Off II

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gent*	6	4	0	2	9	5	43
Genk	6	3	2	1	10	8	37
Sporting Charleroi	6	2	1	3	10	12	34
Mechelen	6	1	1	4	6	10	30

*Gent qualify for the Europa League

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zrinjski Mostar (C)	33	26	6	1	74	14	84
Tuzla City	33	15	12	6	49	36	57
Borac Banja Luka	33	13	15	5	44	34	54
Sarajevo	33	13	7	13	37	33	46
Velez Mostar*	33	13	8	12	42	37	44
Zeljeznicar	33	9	16	8	28	29	43
Siroki Brijeg	33	8	15	10	31	35	39
Posusje	33	8	13	12	33	51	37
Leotar	33	9	7	17	25	46	34
Sloboda Tuzla	33	7	12	14	26	35	33
Radnik Bijeljina (R)	33	5	12	16	34	53	27
Rudar Prijedor (R)	33	5	11	17	28	48	26

*Velez Mostar deducted 3 points

BULGARIA

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ludogorets (C)	31	26	1	4	77	25	79
CSKA Sofia	31	16	10	5	42	31	58
Botev Plovdiv	31	15	8	8	38	33	53
Levski Sofia	31	15	7	9	38	27	52
Cherno More	31	12	11	8	36	22	47
Slavia Sofia	31	9	10	12	35	38	37

Europa Conference League Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Beroe	32	11	8	13	30	33	41
CSKA 1948	32	11	8	13	51	45	41
Lokomotiv Plovdiv	32	9	11	12	36	43	38
Arda	32	8	11	13	38	51	35

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lokomotiv Sofia	32	8	10	14	27	46	34
Pirin Blagoevgrad	32	9	6	17	40	53	33
Botev Vratsa*	32	6	10	16	30	55	28
Tsarsko Selo (R)	32	5	11	16	22	38	26

Botev Vratsa enter the relegation play-off

Play-Offs

Relegation Play-Off

May 27: Botev Vratsa 3-2 Etar

Europa Conference League Play-Off

May 28: Botev Plovdiv 2-1 Beroe

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo Zagreb (C)	36	24	7	5	68	22	79
Hajduk Split	36	21	9	6	64	31	72
Osijek	36	19	12	5	49	29	69
Rijeka	36	20	5	11	71	51	65
Lokomotiva Zagreb	36	12	13	11	55	50	49
HNK Gorica	36	12	9	15	43	50	45
Slaven Koprivnica	36	9	9	18	35	54	36
Sibenik	36	9	5	22	46	75	32
Istra 1961	36	7	10	19	42	67	31
Hrvatski Dragovoljac (R)	36	4	7	25	31	75	19

CYPRUS

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Apollon Limassol (C)	32	16	10	6	50	33	58
AEK Larnaca	32	14	12	6	44	29	54
APOEL	32	14	10	8	48	41	52
Aris Limassol	32	13	11	8	37	32	50
Anorthosis Famagusta	32	13	10	9	48	40	49
Pafos	32	11	13	8	39	30	46

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Omonia Nicosia	32	14	8	10	44	38	50
AEL	32	14	5	13	43	39	47
Olympiakos Nicosia	32	10	10	12	30	31	40
Doxa Katokopias	32	7	11	14	27	41	32
Ethnikos Achna (R)	32	5	8	19	21	41	23
PAEEK (R)	32	3	8	21	25	61	17

CZECH REPUBLIC

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slavia Prague	30	23	4	3	71	19	73
Viktoria Plzen	30	22	6	2	53	19	72
Sparta Prague	30	20	6	4	65	32	66
Slovacko	30	18	5	7	50	30	59
Banik Ostrava	30	14	9	7	54	39	51
Hradec Kralove	30	9	13	8	38	40	40
Mlada Boleslav*	30	11	5	14	45	48	38
Slovan Liberec*	30	10	7	13	29	38	37
Sigma Olomouc*	30	9	10	11	39	37	37
Ceske Budejovice*	30	9	9	12	40	46	36
Zlin	30	8	6	16	36	53	30
Teplice	30	8	3	19	29	49	27
Jablonec	30	4	14	12	22	45	26
Bohemians 1905	30	6	8	16	34	56	26
Pardubice	30	5	9	16	35	67	24
Karvina	30	3	8	19	30	52	17

Qualify for the play-offs

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Viktoria Plzen (C)	35	26	7	2	63	21	85
Slavia Prague	35	24	6	5	80	27	78
Sparta Prague	35	22	7	6	72	40	73
Slovacko	35	21	5	9	59	38	68
Banik Ostrava	35	15	10	10	60	48	55
Hradec Kralove	35	10	14	11	44	52	44

Play-Offs

Semi-Finals

Apr 24: Ceske Budejovice 2-3 Mlada Boleslav; Sigma Olomouc 1-0 Slovan Liberec
Apr 30: Mlada Boleslav 1-0 Ceske Budejovice (agg 4-2); Slovan Liberec 0-2 Sigma Olomouc (agg 0-3)

Final

May 6: Sigma Olomouc 1-2 Mlada Boleslav
May 3: Mlada Boleslav 2-2 Sigma Olomouc (agg 4-3)

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pardubice	35	9	10	16	42	68	37
Zlin	35	9	9	17	43	60	36
Jablonec	35	6	16	13	27	48	34
Bohemians 1905*	35	8	10	17	45	61	34
Teplice**	35	8	5	22	33	59	29
Karvina (R)	35	3	10	22	33	63	19

Bohemians 1905 won their relegation play-off
**Teplice won their relegation play-off*

DENMARK

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Copenhagen (C)	32	20	8	4	56	19	68
Midtjylland	32	20	5	7	59	33	65
Silkeborg	32	13	10	9	54	37	49
Brondby	32	13	9	10	40	41	48
AaB	32	13	6	13	47	45	45
Randers	32	12	7	13	36	42	43

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Viborg	32	10	14	8	45	43	44
OB	32	8	14	10	45	46	38
Nordsjaelland	32	8	12	12	38	47	36
AGF	32	6	12	14	31	43	30
Vejle (R)	32	7	8	17	31	60	29
SpnderjyskE (R)	32	4	11	17	28	54	23

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man. City (C)	38	29	6	3	99	26	93
Liverpool	38	28	8	2	94	26	92
Chelsea	38	21	11	6	76	33	74
Tottenham	38	22	5	11	69	40	71
Arsenal	38	22	3	13	61	48	69
Man. United	38	16	10	12	57	57	58
West Ham	38	16	8	14	60	51	56
Leicester	38	14	10	14	62	59	52
Brighton	38	12	15	11	42	44	51
Wolves	38	15	6	17	38	43	51
Newcastle	38	13	10	15	44	62	49
Crystal Palace	38	11	15	12	50	46	48
Brentford	38	13	7	18	48	56	46
Aston Villa	38	13	6	19	52	54	45
Southampton	38	9	13	16	43	67	40
Everton	38	11	6	21	43	66	39
Leeds	38	9	11	18	42	79	38
Burnley (R)	38	7	14	17	34	53	35
Watford (R)	38	6	5	27	34	77	23
Norwich (R)	38	5	7	26	23	84	22

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSG (C)	38	26	8	4	90	36	86
Marseille	38	21	8	9	63	38	71
Monaco	38	20	9	9	65	40	69
Rennes	38	20	6	12	82	40	66
Nice*	38	20	7	11	52	36	66
Strasbourg	38	17	12	9	60	43	63
Lens	38	17	11	10	62	48	62
Lyon*	38	17	11	10	66	51	61
Nantes	38	15	10	13	55	48	55
Lille	38	14	13	11	48	48	55
Brest	38	13	9	16	49	57	48
Reims	38	11	13	14	43	44	46
Montpellier	38	12	7	19	49	61	43
Angers	38	10	11	17	44	55	41
Troyes	38	9	11	18	37	53	38
Lorient	38	8	12	18	35	63	36
Clermont	38	9	9	20	38	69	36
Saint-Etienne** (R)	38	7	11	20	42	77	32
Metz (R)	38	6	13	19	35	69	31
Bordeaux (R)	38	6	13	19	52	91	31

Nice & Lyon deducted 1 point
**Saint-Etienne lost the relegation play-off*

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern Munich (C)	34	24	5	5	97	37	77
B. Dortmund	34	22	3	9	85	52	69
B. Leverkusen	34	19	7	8	80	47	64
RB Leipzig	34	17	7	10	72	37	58
Union Berlin	34	16	9	9	50	44	57
Freiburg	34	15	10	9	58	46	55
Cologne	34	14	10	10	52	49	52
Mainz	34	13	7	14	50	45	46
Hoffenheim	34	13	7	14	58	60	46
B. M'gladbach	34	12	9	13	54	61	45
E. Frankfurt	34	10	12	12	45	49	42
Wolfsburg	34	12	6	16	43	54	42
Bochum	34	12	6	16	38	52	42
Augsburg	34	10	8	16	39	56	38
Stuttgart	34	7	12	15	41	59	33
Hertha Berlin*	34	9	6	19	37	71	33
Arminia (R)	34	5	13	16	27	53	28
Greuther Furth (R)	34	3	9	22	28	82	18

Hertha Berlin won the relegation play-off

GIBRALTAR

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lincoln Red Imps (C)	20	19	1	0	65	17	58
Europa	20	15	2	3	57	21	47
St. Joseph's	20	11	2	7	45	27	35
Magpies	20	10	3	7	36	25	33
Glacis United	20	7	1	12	32	36	22
Mons Calpe	20	6	2	12	34	36	20

Challenge Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Manchester 62	18	7	5	6	25	28	26
College 1975	18	6	2	10	17	28	20
Lynx	18	6	1	11	25	38	19
Europa Point	18	4	2	12	17	65	14
Lions Gibraltar	18	1	5	12	13	45	8

GREECE

Play-Off Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos (C)	36	25	8	3	62	26	83
PAOK	36	19	7	10	58	33	64
Aris	36	18	8	10	39	28	62
Panathinaikos	36	18	7	11	52	26	61
AEK Athens	36	16	8	12	56	42	56
PAS Giannina	36	12	10	14	34	42	46

Play-Out Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ionikos	33	12	9	12	44	42	45
OFI	33	11	11	11	40	45	44
Asteras Tripolis	33	11	8	14	33	37	41
Volos	33	10	10	13	47	48	40
Panaitolikos	33	10	7	16	32	48	37
Atromitos	33	8	9	16	33	52	33
Lamia*	33	6	8	19	24	44	26
Apollon Smirnis (R)	33	4	10	19	16	57	22

Lamia enter the relegation play-off

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ferencvaros (C)	33	22	5	6	60	31	71
Kisvarda	33	16	11	6	50	34	59
Puskas Akademia	33	14	12	7	43	34	54
Fehervar	33	13	9	11	48	43	48
Ujpest	33	12	8	13	50	48	44
Paks	33	12	7	14	75	63	43
Debrecen	33	10	9	14	45	52	39
Zalaegerszeg	33	10	9	14	44	58	39
Honved	33	10	8	15	48	51	38
Mezokovesd	33	10	8	15	37	49	38
MTK (R)	33	9	9	15	28	50	36
Gyirmot (R)	33	7	11	15	34	49	32

ISRAEL

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maccabi Haifa (C)	35	23	6	6	76	27	75
Hapoel Be'er Sheva	36	20	10	6	53	30	70
Maccabi Tel Aviv	36	20	9	7	63	38	69
Maccabi Netanya	36	13	13	10	47	41	52
Hapoel Tel Aviv	36	13	11	12	44	47	50
Bnei Sakhnin	35	13	10	12	33	40	49

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ironi Kiryat Shmona	33	14	8	11	48	39	50
Hapoel Hadera	33	11	9	13	34	43	42
Ashdod	33	12	3	18	37	52	39
Beitar Jerusalem	33	9	10	14	35	43	37
Hapoel Haifa	33	9	8	16	36	47	35
Hapoel Jerusalem	33	8	9	16	25	41	33
Maccabi Petah Tikva (R)	33	6	9	18	34	49	27
Hapoel Nof HaGalil (R)	33	6	9	18	25	53	27

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan (C)	38	26	8	4	69	31	86
Internazionale	38	25	9	4	84	32	84
Napoli	38	24	7	7	74	31	79
Juventus	38	20	10	8	57	37	70
Lazio	38	18	10	10	77	58	64
Roma	38	18	9	11	59	43	63
Fiorentina	38	19	5	14	59	51	62
Atalanta	38	16	11	11	65	48	59
Verona	38	14	11	13	65	59	53
Torino	38	13	11	14	46	41	50
Sassuolo	38	13	11	14	64	66	50
Udinese	38	11	14	13	61	58	47
Bologna	38	12	10	16	44	55	46
Empoli	38	10	11	17	50	70	41
Sampdoria	38	10	6	22	46	63	36
Spezia	38	10	6	22	41	71	36
Salernitana	38	7	10	21	33	78	31
Cagliari (R)	38	6	12	20	34	68	30
Genoa (R)	38	4	16	18	27	60	28
Venezia (R)	38	6	9	23	34	69	27

KOSOVO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ballkani (C)	36	23	7	6	61	26	76
Drita	36	18	10	8	56	25	64
Gjilani	36	16	14	6	57	36	62
Llapi	36	15	9	12	57	44	54
Prishtina	36	14	9	13	49	37	51
Drenica Skenderaj	36	14	8	14	51	48	50
Dukagjini	36	12	14	10	37	34	50
Malisheva*	36	13	9	14	45	43	48
Ulpiana (R)	36	6	9	21	34	72	27
Feronikeli (R)	36	3	3	30	16	98	12

Malisheva won the relegation play-off

LUXEMBOURG

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
F91 Dudelange (C)	30	21	4	5	78	27	67
Differdange 03	30	19	5	6	58	28	62
Fola Esch	30	18	8	4	64	37	62
Swift Hesperange	30	18	6	6	61	26	50
Progres Niederkorn	30	16	7	7	68	37	55
UNA Strassen	30	14	9	7	53	36	51
Racing FC	30	15	4	11	56	48	49
Jeunesse Esch	30	14	5	11	44	30	47
Mondorf-les-Bains	30	10	7	13	38	44	37
Etzella Ettelbruck	30	12	1	17	45	66	37
UT Petange	30	10	5	15	40	41	35
Victoria Rosport	30	8	9	13	45	59	33
Wiltz*	30	9	4	17	42	53	31
Hostert**	30	8	6	16	42	63	30
Rodange (R)	30	6	1	23	23	70	19
RM Hamm Benfica (R)	30	1	1	28	13	105	4

Wiltz won their relegation play-off
**Hostert won their relegation play-off*

MALTA

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hibernians (C)	27	15	9	3	46	23	54
Floriana	27	14	9	4	38	21	51
Hamrun Spartans	27	13	6	8	33	24	45
Gzira United	27	12	7	8	46	38	43
Birkirkara	27	10	11	6	35	27	41
Gudja United	27	10	2	15	29	35	32

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valletta	27	10	6	11	39	40	36
Sirens	27	9	7	11	40	48	34
Mosta	27	8	8	11	41	50	32
Balzan	27	9	3	15	37	42	30
Santa Lucia (R)	27	5	12	10	36	45	27
Sliema Wanderers (R)	27	4	6	17	16	43	18

MOLDOVA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheriff Tiraspol (C)	28	22	4	2	75	8	70
Petrocub Hincesti	28	20	4	4	62	20	64
Milsami Orhei	28	15	6	7	50	31	51
Sfintul Gheorghe	28	10	8	10	38	39	38
CSF Balti	28	11	3	14	39	39	36
Dinamo-Auto	28	9	5	14	35	72	32
Zimbru Chisinau*	28	7	6	15	32	46	27
Floresti** (R)	28	0	0	28	12	88	-6

Zimbru Chisinau won the relegation play-off
**Floresti deducted 6 points and excluded*

World Service

MONTENEGRO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sutjeska (C)	36	22	9	5	60	21	75
Buducnost	36	20	7	9	67	41	67
Decic	36	15	11	10	50	39	56
Iskra	36	15	6	15	45	40	51
Mornar	36	13	11	12	30	36	50
Jezero	36	14	6	16	37	44	48
Petrovac	36	10	13	13	45	51	43
Rudar*	36	9	9	18	33	51	36
Podgorica*	36	8	10	18	32	57	34
Zeta (R)	36	8	10	18	33	52	34

*Rudar & Podgorica enter the relegation play-offs

NETHERLANDS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax (C)	34	26	5	3	98	19	83
PSV	34	26	3	5	86	42	81
Feyenoord	34	22	5	7	76	34	71
FC Twente	34	20	8	6	55	37	68
AZ	34	18	7	9	64	44	61
Vitesse	34	15	6	13	42	51	51
FC Utrecht	34	12	11	11	51	46	47
Heerenveen	34	11	8	15	37	50	41
Cambuur	34	11	6	17	53	70	39
RKC Waalwijk	34	9	11	14	40	51	38
NEC	34	10	8	16	38	52	38
Groningen	34	9	9	16	41	55	36
Go Ahead Eagles	34	10	6	18	37	51	36
Sparta Rotterdam	34	8	11	15	30	48	35
Fortuna Sittard	34	10	5	19	36	67	35
Heracles* (R)	34	9	7	18	33	49	34
Willem II (R)	34	9	6	19	32	57	33
PEC Zwolle (R)	34	7	6	21	26	52	27

*Heracles lost in the relegation play-offs

NORTH MACEDONIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shkupi (C)	33	23	7	3	66	21	76
Akademija Pandev	33	19	7	7	55	32	64
Shkendija	33	16	13	4	49	25	61
Makedonija GP	33	17	6	10	46	44	57
Renova	33	12	12	9	42	29	48
Struga	33	12	11	10	33	33	47
Bregalnica Stip	33	12	9	12	45	47	45
Rabotnicki	33	13	4	16	29	35	43
Skopje*	33	9	8	16	27	45	35
Tikves**	33	9	7	17	36	38	34
Borec (R)	33	5	6	22	25	66	21
Pelister (R)	33	2	8	23	16	54	14

*Skopje won their relegation play-off
**Tikves won their relegation play-off

NORTHERN IRELAND

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Linfield (C)	38	24	11	3	67	24	83
Cliftonville	38	24	10	4	61	29	82
Glentoran	38	21	8	9	68	44	71
Crusaders	38	21	5	12	60	36	68
Larne	38	17	11	10	61	39	62
Coleraine	38	14	9	15	55	45	51

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Glenavon	38	15	9	14	54	50	54
Ballymena United	38	16	5	17	46	52	53
Dungannon Swifts	38	11	2	25	46	86	35
Carrick Rangers	38	9	7	22	41	67	34
Portadown*	38	5	10	23	29	72	25
Warrenpoint Town (R)	38	6	3	29	35	79	21

*Portadown enter the NIFL Premiership play-off

Play-Offs

NIFL Premiership Play-Off

May 3: Annagh United 2-3 Portadown
May 6: Portadown 1-0 Annagh United (agg 4-2)

Conference League Play-Off Semi-Finals

May 10: Glentoran 2-0 Glenavon; Larne 2-0 Coleraine

Conference League Play-Off Final

May 10: Glentoran 2-4 Larne

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lech Poznan (C)	34	22	8	4	67	24	74
Rakow Czestochowa	34	20	9	5	60	30	69
Pogon Szczecin	34	18	11	5	63	31	65
Lechia Gdansk	34	16	9	9	52	39	57
Piast Gliwice	34	15	9	10	45	37	54
Wisla Plock	34	15	3	16	48	51	48
Radomiak Radom	34	11	15	8	42	40	48
Gornik Zabrze	34	13	8	13	55	55	47
Cracovia	34	12	10	12	40	42	46
Legia Warsaw	34	13	4	17	46	48	43
Warta Poznan	34	11	9	14	35	38	42
Jagiellonia Bialystok	34	9	13	12	39	50	40
Zaglebie Lubin	34	11	5	18	43	59	38
Stal Mielec	34	9	10	15	39	52	37
Slask Wroclaw	34	7	14	13	42	52	35
Nieciecza (R)	34	7	11	16	36	56	32
Wiska Krakow (R)	34	7	10	17	37	54	31
Gornik Leczna (R)	34	6	10	18	29	60	28

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto (C)	34	29	4	1	86	22	91
Sporting	34	27	4	3	73	23	85
Benfica	34	23	5	6	78	30	74
Braga	34	19	8	7	52	31	65
Gil Vicente	34	13	12	9	47	42	51
Vitoria Guimaraes	34	13	9	12	50	41	48
Santa Clara	34	9	13	12	38	54	40
Famalicao	34	9	12	13	45	51	39
Estoril	34	9	12	13	36	43	39
Maritimo	34	9	11	14	39	44	38
Pacos de Ferreira	34	9	11	14	29	44	38
Boavista	34	7	17	10	39	52	38
Portimonense	34	10	8	16	31	45	38
Vizela	34	7	12	15	37	58	33
Arouca	34	7	10	17	30	54	31
Moreirense* (R)	34	7	8	19	33	51	29
Tondela (R)	34	7	7	20	41	67	28
Belenenses (R)	34	5	11	18	23	55	26

*Moreirense lost their relegation play-off

ROMANIA

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CFR Cluj	30	24	4	2	48	16	76
FCSB	30	18	8	4	54	28	62
Universitatea Craiova	30	16	6	8	55	29	54
Arges	30	14	6	10	28	22	48
Farul Constanta	30	14	6	10	42	21	48
Voluntari	30	13	8	9	31	27	47
Botosani	30	11	13	6	33	28	46
Rapid Bucharest	30	9	13	8	34	31	40
UTA Arad	30	9	13	8	24	20	40
Sepsi	30	9	12	9	33	29	39
Chindia Targoviste	30	8	11	11	23	23	35
U Craiova	30	8	9	13	31	35	33
Mioveni	30	6	11	13	19	36	29
Dinamo Bucharest	30	4	5	21	24	66	17
Academica Clinceni	30	3	5	22	21	64	14
Gaz Metan Medias*	30	6	6	18	21	46	2

*Gaz Metan Medias deducted 22 points

Play-Off Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CFR Cluj (C)	10	6	1	3	18	9	57
FCSB	10	8	1	1	24	7	56
Universitatea Craiova	10	7	0	3	22	9	48
Voluntari	10	3	2	5	9	14	35
Farul Constanta	10	2	2	6	5	16	32
Arges	10	1	0	9	3	26	27

Play-Out Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sepsi	9	7	1	1	21	4	42
Botosani	9	6	0	3	18	9	41
Rapid Bucharest	9	6	1	2	22	7	39
U Craiova 1948	9	5	2	2	14	11	34
UTA Arad	9	4	1	4	10	6	33
Mioveni	9	5	1	3	12	10	31
Chindia Targoviste*	9	2	2	5	8	8	26
Dinamo Bucharest* (R)	9	4	2	3	14	11	23
Academica Clinceni** (R)	9	0	0	9	4	32	-19
Gaz Metan Medias*** (R)	9	1	0	8	6	31	-38

*Chindia Targoviste & Dinamo Bucharest entered the relegation play-offs
**Academica Clinceni deducted 26 points
***Gaz Metan Media deducted 42 points

Play-Offs

Europa Conference League Play-Off

May 27: U Craiova 2-0 Botosani

Relegation Play-Offs

May 21: Concordia Chiajna 2–1 Chindia Targoviste; Universitatea Cluj 2–0 Dinamo Bucharest
May 29: Chindia Targoviste 1-0 Concordia Chiajna (agg 2-2, Chindia win 4-1 on penalties); Dinamo Bucharest 1-1 Universitatea Cluj (agg 1-3)

RUSSIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit (C)	30	19	8	3	66	28	65
Sochi	30	17	5	8	54	30	56
Dinamo Moscow	30	16	5	9	53	41	53
Krasnodar	30	14	8	8	42	30	50
CSKA Moscow	30	15	5	10	42	29	50
Lokomotiv Moscow	30	13	9	8	43	39	48
Akhmat Grozny	30	13	3	14	36	38	42
Krylya Sovetov	30	12	5	13	39	36	41
Rostov	30	10	8	12	47	51	38
Spartak Moscow	30	10	8	12	37	41	38
Nizhny Novgorod	30	8	9	13	26	39	33
Ural Yekaterinburg	30	8	9	13	27	35	33
Khimki*	30	7	11	12	34	47	32
Ufa** (R)	30	6	12	12	29	40	30
Rubin Kazan (R)	30	8	5	17	34	56	29
Arsenal Tula (R)	30	5	8	17	30	59	23

*Khimki won their relegation play-off
**Ufa lost their relegation play-off

SAN MARINO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
La Fiorita*	28	17	9	2	43	16	60
Tre Penne*	28	17	8	3	65	29	59
Tre Fiori*	28	14	10	4	46	28	52
Virtus*	28	15	7	6	32	18	52
Pennarossa**	28	12	11	5	30	22	47
Faetano**	28	13	7	8	39	26	46
Libertas**	28	13	5	10	48	40	44
Folgore**	28	10	10	8	36	23	40
Fiorentino**	28	9	9	10	43	37	36
Domagnano**	28	8	6	14	28	40	30
San Giovanni**	28	6	11	11	29	34	29
Murata**	28	5	10	13	20	32	25
Cailungo	28	4	10	14	26	46	22
Juvenes/Dogana	28	5	6	17	24	63	21
Cosmos	28	0	5	23	9	64	5

*Qualify for final stages
*Qualify for final stage play-offs

Final Stages

Play-Offs

May 3: Pennarossa 1-1 Murata; Faetano 1-1 San Giovanni; Libertas 5-0 Domagnano; Folgore 0-2 Fiorentino
May 7: Murata 1-2 Pennarossa (agg 2-3); San Giovanni 1-2 Faetano (agg 2-3); Domagnano 0-3 Libertas (agg 0-8); Fiorentino 1-2 Folgore (agg 3-2)

Quarter-Finals

May 11: Tre Fiori 1-1 Faetano; Virtus 0-1 Pennarossa; Tre Penne 2-0 Libertas; La Fiorita 0-1 Fiorentino
May 15: Faetano 1-1 Tre Fiori (agg 2-2); Pennarossa 1-1 Virtus (agg 2-1); Libertas 1-0 Tre Penne (agg 1-2); Fiorentino 0-2 La Fiorita (agg 1-2)

Semi-Finals

May 18: La Fiorita 2-1 Pennarossa; Tre Fiori 0-1 Tre Penne
May 22: Pennarossa 1-0 La Fiorita (agg 2-2); Tre Penne 2-1 Tre Fiori (agg 3-1)

Third-Place Play-Off

May 25: Pennarossa 1-2 Tre Fiori

Final

May 26: La Fiorita 2-0 Tre Penne

SCOTLAND

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic (C)	38	29	6	3	92	22	93
Rangers	38	27	8	3	80	31	89
Hearts	38	17	10	11	54	44	61
Dundee United	38	12	12	14	37	44	48
Motherwell	38	12	10	16	42	61	46
Ross County	38	10	11	17	47	61	41

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Livingston	38	13	10	15	41	46	49
Hibernian	38	11	12	15	38	42	45
St. Mirren	38	10	14	14	33	51	44
Aberdeen	38	10	11	17	41	46	41
St. Johnstone*	38	8	11	19	24	51	35
Dundee (R)	38	6	11	21	34	64	29

*St. Johnstone enter the Premiership play-offs

Premiership Play-Offs

Quarter-Final

May 3: Partick Thistle 1-2 Inverness CT
May 6: Inverness CT 1-0 Partick Thistle (agg 3-1)

Semi-Final

May 10: Inverness CT 0-0 Arbroath
May 13: Arbroath 0-0 Inverness CT (agg 0-0p)

Final

May 20: Inverness CT 2-2 St. Johnstone
May 23: St. Johnstone 4-0 Inverness CT (agg 6-2)

SERBIA

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star Belgrade (C)	37	32	4	1	95	19	100
Partizan Belgrade	37	31	5	1	85	13	98
Cukaricki	37	15	15	7	54	34	60
Radnicki Nis	37	12	15	10	40	39	51
Vozdovac	37	13	10	14	48	45	49
Backa Topola	37	13	9	15	51	56	48
Vojvodina	37	13	6	18	44	51	45
Napredak Krusevac	37	10	8	19	31	51	38

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Radnik Surdulica	37	12	15	10	37	37	51
Kolubara	37	14	4	19	42	65	46
Mladost Lucani	37	12	9	16	46	52	45
Spartak Subotica	37	12	8	17	45	60	44
Novi Pazar*	37	10	11	16	39	54	41
Radnicki Kragujevac**	37	9	8	20	34	60	35
Metalac GM (R)	37	8	9	20	42	65	33
Proleter Novi Sad (R)	37	8	8	21	25	57	32

*Novi Pazar won their relegation play-off
**Radnicki Kragujevac won their relegation play-off

SLOVAKIA

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slovan Bratislava (C)	32	22	8	2	71	25	74
Ruzomberok	32	17	12	3	58	23	63
Spartak Trnava	32	17	9	6	36	17	60
DAC	32	12	10	10	39	37	46
Sered'* (R)	32	10	9	13	34	46	39
Zilina	32	8	10	14	43	52	34

*Sered' relegated automatically after failing to obtain a licence for the 2022-23 season

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Trencin	32	13	9	10	58	43	48
Liptovsky Mikulas	32	11	7	14	42	57	40
Zemplin Michalovce	32	12	4	16	32	42	40
Senica	32	9	7	16	29	51	34
Zlate Moravce	32	7	9	16	33	50	30
Pohronie (R)	32	4	6	22	27	59	18

SLOVENIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maribor (C)	34	21	7	8	57	37	70
Koper	34	19	10	7	54	38	67
Olimpija Ljubljana	34	18	8	10	53	38	62
Mura	34	15	12	9	57	50	57
Bravo	34	13	10	13	33	33	49
Radomlje	34	12	10	14	47	52	46
Domzale	34	11	12	13	47	46	45
Celje	34	12	6	18	46	50	42
Tabor Sezana*	34	7	9	20	30	41	30
Aluminij (R)	34	4	12	20	33	72	24

*Tabor Sezana won the relegation play-off

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid (C)	38	26	8	4	80	31	86
Barcelona	38	21	10	7	68	38	73
Atletico Madrid	38	21	8	9	65	43	71
Sevilla	38	18	16	4	53	30	70
Real Betis	38	19	8	11	62	40	65
Real Sociedad	38	17	11	10	40	37	62
Villarreal	38	16	11	11	63	37	59
Athletic Bilbao	38	14	13	11	43	36	55
Valencia	38	11	15	12	48	53	48
Osasuna	38	12	11	15	37	51	47
Celta Vigo	38	12	10	16	43	43	46
Rayo Vallecano	38	11	9	18	39	50	42
Elche	38	11	9	18	40	52	42
Espanyol	38	10	12	16	40	53	42
Getafe	38	8	15	15	33	41	39
Mallorca	38	10	9	19	36	63	39
Cadiz	38	8	15	15	35	51	39

Granada (R)	38	8	14	16	44	61	38
Levante (R)	38	8	11	19	51	76	35
Alaves (R)	38	8	7	23	31	65	31

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zurich (C)	36	23	7	6	78	46	76
Basel	36	15	17	4	70	41	62
Young Boys	36	16	12	8	80	50	60
Lugano	36	16	6	14	50	54	54
St. Gallen	36	14	8	14	68	63	50
Servette	36	12	8	16	50	65	44
Sion	36	11	8	17	46	67	41
Grasshopper	36	9	13	14	54	58	40
Luzern*	36	9	13	14	52	64	40
Lausanne Sport (R)	36	4	10	22	37	76	22

Luzern won the relegation play-off

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Trabzonspor (C)	38	23	12	3	69	36	81
Fenerbahce	38	21	10	7	73	38	73
Konyaspor	38	20	8	10	66	45	68
Istanbul Basaksehir	38	19	8	11	56	36	65
Alanyaspor	38	19	7	12	67	58	64
Besiktas	38	15	14	9	56	48	59
Antalyaspor	38	16	11	11	54	47	59
Fatih Karagumruk	38	16	9	13	47	52	57
Adana Demirspor	38	15	10	13	60	47	55
Sivasspor	38	14	12	12	52	50	54
Kasımpasa	38	15	8	15	67	57	53
Hatayspor	38	15	8	15	56	60	53
Galatasaray	38	14	10	14	51	53	52
Kayserispor	38	12	11	15	54	61	47
Gaziantep	38	12	10	16	48	56	46
Giresunspor	38	12	9	17	41	47	45
Caykur Rizespor (R)	38	10	6	22	44	71	36
Altay (R)	38	9	7	22	39	57	34
Goztepe (R)	38	7	7	24	40	77	28
Yeni Malatyaspor (R)	38	5	5	28	27	71	20

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar Donetsk	18	15	2	1	49	10	47
Dynamo Kyiv	18	14	3	1	47	9	45
Dnipro-1	18	13	1	4	35	17	40
Zorya Luhansk	18	11	3	4	37	19	36
Vorskla Poltava	18	9	6	3	30	18	33
Oleksandria	18	7	5	6	19	16	26
Desna Chernihiv	18	7	4	7	22	27	25
Kolos Kovalivka	18	7	3	8	14	23	24
Veres Rivne	18	6	5	7	15	20	23
Metalist 1925 Kharkiv	18	6	1	11	17	29	19
Rukh Lviv	17	4	6	7	16	21	18
FC Lviv	18	4	5	9	14	30	17
Chornomorets Odesa	18	3	5	10	20	40	14
Inhulets Petrove	17	3	4	10	13	28	13
Mynai	18	1	7	10	12	30	10
FC Mariupol	18	2	2	14	21	44	8

The Ukrainian Premier League was officially terminated in April, with no champions awarded and no clubs relegated

WALES

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
The New Saints (C)	32	25	5	2	86	26	80
Bala Town	32	16	11	5	67	37	59
Newtown	32	15	6	11	50	35	51
Caernarfon Town	32	13	4	15	46	53	43
Flint Town United	32	12	6	14	51	53	42
Penybont	32	10	10	12	49	57	40

Relegation Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cardiff MU	32	10	12	10	35	38	42
Aberystwyth Town	32	11	7	14	38	45	40
Connah's Quay Nomads*	32	15	11	6	44	18	38
Haverfordwest County	32	10	8	14	45	46	38
Barry Town Utd (R)	32	8	7	17	31	47	31
Cefn Druids (R)	32	2	3	27	22	109	9

Connah's Quay Nomads deducted 18 points

AFRICA

2021-22 CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Semi-Finals – 1st leg

May 7 – Cairo
Al Ahly 4 (Tau 30, 90, Mohamed 54, Sherif 72)
ES Setif 0

May 7 – Luanda
Petro de Luanda 1 (Job 81)
Wydad 3 (Azulao 16 og, Jabrane 45, Mbenza 68)

Semi-Finals – 2nd leg

May 13 – Casablanca
Wydad 1 (Farhane 28)
Petro de Luanda 1 (Gleison 21)
Wydad win 4-2 on aggregate

May 14 – Algiers
ES Setif 2 (Kendouci 45, Benayad 61)
Al Ahly 2 (Abdel Kader 2, Sherif 90+2)
Al Ahly win 6-2 on aggregate

Final

May 30 – Casablanca
Al Ahly 0
Wydad 2 (El-Moutaraji 15, 48)

2021-22 CAF CONFEDERATION CUP

Group A

Feb 13: Pyramids 2-1 Al Ahli Tripoli; CS Sfaxien 1-0 Zanaco
Feb 20: Zanaco 0-2 Pyramids; Al Ahli Tripoli 2-1 CS Sfaxien
Feb 27: Pyramids 1-0 CS Sfaxien; Al Ahli Tripoli 2-0 Zanaco
Mar 13: Zanaco 2-3 Al Ahli Tripoli; CS Sfaxien 1-1 Pyramids
Mar 20: Zanaco 1-0 CS Sfaxien; Al Ahli Tripoli 1-0 Pyramids
Apr 3: CS Sfaxien 0-0 Al Ahli Tripoli; Pyramids 1-0 Zanaco

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahli Tripoli (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	5	13
Pyramids (Q)	6	4	1	1	7	3	13
CS Sfaxien	6	1	2	3	3	5	5
Zanaco	6	1	0	5	3	9	3

Group B

Feb 13: Orlando Pirates 2-0 JS Saoura
Feb 20: Al Ittihad 3-2 Orlando Pirates; JS Saoura 2-0 Royal Leopards
Feb 27: Al Ittihad 1-1 JS Saoura; Royal Leopards 2-6 Orlando Pirates
Mar 6: Royal Leopards 1-2 Al Ittihad
Mar 13: Orlando Pirates 3-0 Royal Leopards; JS Saoura 1-0 Al Ittihad
Mar 20: Al Ittihad 3-2 Royal Leopards; JS Saoura 0-2 Orlando Pirates
Apr 3: Royal Leopards 0-2 JS Saoura; Orlando Pirates 0-0 Al Ittihad

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Orlando Pirates (Q)	6	4	1	1	15	5	13
Al Ittihad (Q)	6	3	2	1	9	7	11
JS Saoura	6	3	1	2	6	5	10
Royal Leopards	6	0	0	6	5	18	0

Group C

Feb 13: Coton Sport 0-0 Al Masry; TP Mazembe 1-0 AS Otoho
Feb 20: Al Masry 2-0 TP Mazembe
Feb 23: AS Otoho 1-1 Coton Sport
Feb 27: TP Mazembe 1-0 Coton Sport; AS Otoho 1-0 Al Masry
Mar 13: Coton Sport 2-2 TP Mazembe; Al Masry 1-0 AS Otoho
Mar 20: Al Masry 2-0 Coton Sport; AS Otoho 2-2 TP Mazembe
Apr 3: TP Mazembe 2-0 Al Masry; Coton Sport 0-1 AS Otoho

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TP Mazembe (Q)	6	3	2	1	8	6	11
Al Masry (Q)	6	3	1	2	5	3	10
AS Otoho	6	2	2	2	5	5	8
Coton Sport	6	0	3	3	3	7	3

Group D

Feb 13: Simba 3-1 ASEC Mimosas; RS Berkane 5-3 USGN
Feb 20: ASEC Mimosas 3-1 RS Berkane; USGN 1-1 Simba
Feb 27: USGN 2-0 ASEC Mimosas; RS Berkane 2-0 Simba
Mar 13: Simba 1-0 RS Berkane; ASEC Mimosas 2-1 USGN
Mar 20: USGN 2-2 RS Berkane; ASEC Mimosas 3-0 Simba
Apr 3: RS Berkane 1-0 ASEC Mimosas; Simba 4-0 USGN

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
RS Berkane (Q)	6	3	1	2	11	9	10
Simba (Q)	6	3	1	2	9	7	10
ASEC Mimosas	6	3	0	3	9	8	9
USGN	6	1	2	3	9	14	5

Quarter-Finals – 1st leg

Apr 17 – Dar es Salaam
Simba 1 (Kapombe 68 pen)
Orlando Pirates 0

Apr 17 – Benghazi
Al Ittihad 0
Al Ahli Tripoli 0

Apr 17 – Cairo
Pyramids 0
TP Mazembe 0

Apr 17 – Alexandria
Al Masry 2 (Marey 10, Ayoni 83)
RS Berkane 1 (Regragui 17)

Quarter-Finals – 2nd leg

Apr 24 – Johannesburg
Orlando Pirates 1 (Peprah 60)
Simba 0
1-1 on aggregate. Orlando Pirates win 4-3 on penalties

Apr 24 – Benghazi
Al Ahli Tripoli 1 (Ayed 19)
Al Ittihad 0
Al Ahli Tripoli win 1-0 on aggregate

Apr 24 – Lubumbashi
TP Mazembe 2 (Koffi 33, Kitambala 44)
Pyramids 0
TP Mazembe win 2-0 on aggregate

Apr 24 – Berkane
RS Berkane 1 (El Fahli 7 pen)
Al Masry 0
2-2 on aggregate. RS Berkane win on away goals

Semi- Finals – 1st leg

May 8 – Benghazi
Al Ahli Tripoli 0
Orlando Pirates 2 (Maele 8, Mosele 29)

May 8 – Lubumbashi
TP Mazembe 1 (Bakata 90+5)
RS Berkane 0

Semi- Finals – 2nd leg

May 15 – Johannesburg
Orlando Pirates 0
Al Ahli Tripoli 1 (Arqoub 89)
Orlando Pirates win 2-1 on aggregate

May 15 – Berkane
RS Berkane 4 (El Helali 10, Naji 79, El Fahli 88 pen, 90+6)
TP Mazembe 1 (Kinzumbi 11)
RS Berkane win 4-2 on aggregate

Final

May 20 – Uyo
Orlando Pirates 1 (Lorch 117)
RS Berkane 1 (El Fahli 97 pen)
AET. RS Berkane win 5-4 on penalties

Final Tables 2021-22

ANGOLA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Petro de Luanda (C)	30	23	6	1	74	17	75
1º de Agosto	30	18	7	5	55	21	61
Sagrada Esperanca	30	18	6	6	49	22	60
Interclube	30	14	8	8	41	28	50
Bravos do Maquis	30	12	10	8	34	31	46
Desportivo Huila	30	12	9	9	40	34	45
Recreativo da Caala	30	11	9	10	30	19	42
Acadamica do Lobito	30	10	10	10	38	31	40
Recreativo do Libolo	30	9	10	11	28	31	37
Cuando Cubango	30	9	9	12	22	33	36
Wiliete	30	7	13	10	38	40	34
Sporting de Cabinda	30	8	9	13	20	37	33
CD Lunda-Sul	30	6	14	10	24	30	32
Kabuscorp* (R)	30	6	11	13	31	40	20
Progresso (R)	30	4	7	19	22	61	19
Sporting de Benguela (R)	30	1	6	23	15	88	9

Kabuscorp deducted 9 points

BURKINA FASO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Etoile Filante (C)	30	12	12	6	32	16	48
Douanes	30	13	9	8	23	19	48
RC Kadiogo	30	12	12	6	32	25	48
ASFA-Yennenga	30	12	10	8	28	20	46
Majestic	30	14	4	12	37	34	46
ASEC Koudougou	30	10	12	8	19	13	42
USFA	30	9	13	8	25	25	40
Royal	30	11	7	12	33	31	40
SONABEL	30	11	5	14	24	32	38
Kiko	30	9	10	11	30	30	37
Police	30	9	9	12	29	32	36
RC Bobo-Dioulasso	30	8	12	10	17	23	36
ASK	30	7	14	9	16	19	35
ASF Bobo-Dioulasso	30	8	11	11	24	30	35
Vitesse (R)	30	8	10	12	31	37	34
Salitas (R)	30	9	6	15	23	37	33

BURUNDI

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Flambeau du Centre (C)	30	16	5	9	40	24	53
Athletico Olympic	30	15	7	8	35	22	52
Bumamuru	30	15	6	9	40	27	51
Top Junior	30	14	9	7	37	29	51
Aigle Noir	30	12	10	8	39	31	46
Olympic Star	30	11	13	6	31	25	46
Le Messager Ngozi	30	13	7	10	27	21	46
Dynamik	30	13	7	10	35	33	46
Musongati	30	12	8	10	27	22	44
Rukinzo	30	8	15	7	26	25	39
Vital'O	30	11	6	13	32	39	39
Bujumbura City	30	9	10	11	35	37	37
Kayanza United	30	8	9	13	34	38	33
Les Crocos (R)	30	5	9	16	19	29	24
Flambeau de l'Est (R)	30	5	8	17	18	54	23
Royal de Muramvya (R)	30	5	7	18	24	43	22

DJIBOUTI

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arta/Solar 7 (C)	18	14	3	1	55	12	45
Port	18	10	5	3	39	19	35
GR/SIAF	18	10	5	3	29	14	35
ASAS	18	10	4	4	34	18	34
Gendarmerie	18	7	6	5	21	21	27
Police Nationale	18	7	5	6	24	21	26
Dikhil	18	4	7	7	21	23	19
Hayabley	18	4	2	12	25	33	14
EAD/PK 12 (R)	18	3	5	10	11	24	14
Arhiba (R)	18	0	0	18	17	91	0

GUINEA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Horoya (C)	26	20	4	2	43	5	64
SOAR Coyah	26	14	8	4	34	21	50
Milo	26	14	5	7	38	28	47
Ashanti GB	26	13	7	6	25	18	46
CI Kamsar	26	12	7	7	27	16	43
Wakirya	26	11	8	7	24	19	41
Hafia	26	10	8	8	30	23	38
Kaloum Star	26	10	5	11	25	32	35
Sequence	26	8	5	13	30	28	29
Fello Star	26	8	5	13	28	35	29
Satellite	26	7	4	15	28	36	25
Flamme Olympique	26	5	6	15	25	42	21
Elephant Coleah (R)	26	4	7	15	29	44	19
Loubha Telimele (R)	26	4	5	17	24	63	17

LESOTHO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Matlama (C)	30	23	3	4	50	14	72
LDF	30	19	5	6	49	19	62
LCS	30	17	7	6	59	19	58
Bantu	30	17	7	6	48	22	58
Lioli	30	15	8	7	34	17	53
LMPS	30	15	6	9	33	23	51
Lijabatho	30	13	9	8	42	30	48
Linare	30	13	9	8	37	27	48
Kick4Life	30	12	7	11	23	30	43

Liphakoe	30	6	10	14	17	29	28
Lifofane	30	6	10	14	24	42	28
CCX	30	5	12	13	24	40	27
Manonyane (R)	30	6	9	15	25	49	27
Mazenod Swallows (R)	30	6	5	19	24	50	23
Likhopo (R)	30	3	10	17	20	54	19
Sefotha-fotha (R)	30	1	9	20	15	59	12

LIBERIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Watanga (C)	22	13	3	6	37	17	42
BEA Mountain	22	11	8	3	32	20	41
LISCR	22	9	9	4	42	26	36
Freeport	22	8	9	5	35	26	33
Nimba Kwado	22	9	6	7	25	18	33
Nimba United	22	10	2	10	32	37	32
Mighty Barrolle	22	7	10	5	31	34	31
LPRC Oilers	22	8	5	9	31	27	29
MC Breweries	22	6	5	11	22	39	23
Invincible Eleven (R)	22	5	7	10	21	30	22
Heaven Eleven (R)	22	4	8	10	16	34	20
Sandi (R)	22	4	4	14	22	38	16

UGANDA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Vipers (C)	30	23	5	2	69	19	74
KCCA	30	15	11	4	41	21	56
URA	30	15	10	5	57	27	55
BUL	30	14	10	6	54	32	52
Arua Hill	30	14	10	6	38	27	52
Express	30	11	13	6	31	25	46
Wakiso Giants	30	12	3	15	38	47	39
Gaddafi	30	9	10	11	33	36	37
Onduparaka*	30	10	9	11	32	37	37
UPDF	30	9	10	11	33	42	37
Bright Stars	30	9	9	12	26	34	36
SC Villa**	30	8	10	12	27	32	33
Busoga United	30	9	5	16	26	45	32
Police (R)	30	6	10	14	32	46	28
Mbarara City (R)	30	6	7	17	28	36	25
Tooro United (R)	30	2	4	24	20	81	10

Onduparaka deducted 2 points
***SC Villa deducted 1 point*

ZAMBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Arrows (C)	34	20	10	4	52	28	70
ZESCO United	34	18	9	7	39	22	63
Green Eagles	34	14	15	5	34	22	57
Nkana	34	14	10	10	35	29	52
Power Dynamos	34	13	11	10	38	27	50
Zanaco	34	11	16	7	31	28	49
Kansanshi Dynamos	34	12	12	10	26	27	48
Kabwe Warriors	34	12	10	12	34	30	46
Prison Leopards	34	11	13	10	33	30	46
Buildcon	34	12	10	12	38	37	46
Forest Rangers	34	9	17	8	37	35	44
Green Buffaloes	34	11	11	12	46	46	44
Nkwazi	34	10	8	16	25	31	38
Chambishi	34	10	8	16	23	38	38
Lusaka Dynamos	34	6	13	15	27	38	31
Kafue Celtic (R)	34	6	13	15	27	40	31
Indeni (R)	34	7	10	17	20	46	31
Konkola Blades (R)	34	6	12	16	27	38	30

ASIA

2022 AFC CUP

Group Stage

Central Asia, ASEAN and East Asia Zones (Groups E-J) will take place June 24-30

West Asia Zone

Group A

May 18: Al Ansar 1-1 Al Kuwait; Al Seeb 1-0 Jableh
May 21: Al Kuwait 2-1 Al Seeb; Jableh 1-0 Al Ansar
May 24: Al Ansar 0-4 Al Seeb; Jableh 0-0 Al Kuwait

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Seeb (Q)	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
Al Kuwait	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Jableh	3	1	1	1	1	1	4
Al Ansar	3	0	1	2	1	6	1

Group B

May 18: Al Riffa 2-3 Al Arabi; Shabab Al Khalil 0-3 Dhofar
May 21: Al Arabi 1-0 Shabab Al Khalil; Dhofar 2-3 Al Riffa
May 24: Dhofar 1-1 Al Arabi; Al Riffa 3-1 Shabab Al Khalil

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Arabi (Q)	3	2	1	0	5	3	7
Al Riffa (Q)	3	2	0	1	8	6	6
Dhofar	3	1	1	1	6	7	4
Shabab Al Khalil	3	0	0	3	1	4	0

Group C

May 18: Tishreen 0-0 Hilal Al Quds; Nejmeh 1-1 East Riffa
May 21: Hilal Al Quds 0-2 Nejmeh; East Riffa 2-0 Tishreen
May 24: Tishreen 3-1 Nejmeh; East Riffa 2-2 Hilal Al Quds

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
East Riffa (Q)	3	1	2	0	5	3	5
Tishreen	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Nejmeh	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Hilal Al Quds	3	0	2	1	2	4	2

Southeast Asia Zone

Group D

May 18: Gokulam Kerala 4-2 ATK Mohun Bagan; Bashundhara Kings 1-0 Maziya
May 21: ATK Mohun Bagan 4-0 Bashundhara Kings; Maziya 1-0 Gokulam Kerala
May 24: Gokulam Kerala 1-2 Bashundhara Kings; Maziya 2-5 ATK Mohun Bagan

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ATK Mohun Bagan (Q)	3	2	0	1	11	6	6
Bashundhara Kings	3	2	0	1	3	5	6
Maziya	3	1	0	2	3	6	3
Gokulam Kerala	3	1	0	2	5	5	3

Final Tables 2021-22

AUSTRALIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Melbourne City*	26	14	7	5	55	33	49
Melbourne Victory*	26	13	9	4	42	25	48
Western United**	26	13	6	7	40	30	45
Adelaide United**	26	12	7	7	38	31	43
Central Coast Mariners**	26	12	6	8	49	35	42
Wellington Phoenix**	26	12	3	11	34	49	39
Macarthur	26	9	6	11	38	47	33
Sydney FC	26	8	7	11	37	44	31
Newcastle Jets	26	8	5	13	45	43	29
Western Sydney Wanderers	26	6	9	11	30	38	27
Brisbane Roar	26	7	5	14	29	39	26
Perth Glory	26	4	6	16	20	43	18

Qualify for final series
***Qualify for final series elimination play-offs*

Final Series

Elimination Play-Offs

May 14 – Melbourne
Western United 1 (Prijovic 10)
Wellington Phoenix 0

May 15 – Adelaide
Adelaide United 3 (Goodwin 26, Yengi 67, Oliveira 90)
Central Coast Mariners 1 (Roux 71)

Semi-Finals – 1st Leg

May 17 – Melbourne
Western United 0
Melbourne Victory 1 (Brimmer 74)

May 18 – Adelaide
Adelaide United 0
Melbourne City 0

Semi-Finals – 2nd Leg

May 21 – Melbourne
Melbourne Victory 1 (Brimmer 37)
Western United 4 (Prijovic 18, 49, Wales 78, Wenzel-Halls 90+9)
Western United win 4-2 on aggregate

May 22 – Melbourne
Melbourne City 2 (Tilio 74, Maclaren 92)
Adelaide United 1 (Clough 48)
AET. Melbourne City win 2-1 on aggregate

Grand Final

May 28 – Melbourne
Melbourne City 0
Western United 2 (Reiss 2 og, Prijovic 30)

BAHRAIN

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Riffa (C)	18	12	6	0	32	9	42
Manama	18	11	6	1	31	13	39
Khalidiya	18	8	6	4	24	13	30
Muharraq	18	8	3	7	22	19	27
Al Hala	18	6	7	5	21	24	25
East Riffa	18	6	6	6	24	22	24
Al Ahli	18	3	8	7	18	29	17
Budaiya*	18	5	2	11	19	29	17
Al Hidd*	18	2	7	9	13	27	13
Al Najma (R)	18	1	5	12	12	31	8

**Budaiya & Al Hidd enter the relegation play-off group along with Bahraini Second Division sides Sitra & Malkiya*

Relegation Play-Off

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hidd (S)	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Sitra (P)	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Budaiya (R)	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
Malkiya (S)	3	0	0	3	3	7	0

(P) promoted; (R) relegated; (S) stay in current league

KUWAIT

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kuwait SC (C)	18	13	3	2	37	11	42
Kazma	18	10	5	3	24	17	35
Al Arabi	18	10	2	6	32	23	32
Al Salmiyah	18	9	4	5	32	24	31
Al Qadsia	18	9	3	6	25	23	30
Al Nasar	18	7	3	8	28	24	24
Al Fahaheel	18	4	6	8	16	26	18
Al Tadhamon	18	4	4	10	30	41	16
Yarmouk (R)	18	3	3	12	20	35	12
Al Shabab (R)	18	3	3	12	9	29	12

OMAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Seeb (C)	26	16	7	3	50	17	55
Al Nahda	26	15	8	3	35	17	53
Dhofar	26	13	9	4	39	17	48
Al Musannah	26	12	7	7	33	24	43
Al Nasr	26	11	9	6	28	22	42
Sohar	26	10	9	7	32	31	39
Al Rustaq	26	9	8	9	25	24	35
Oman Club	26	8	7	11	30	33	31
Al Suwaiq	26	8	7	11	24	28	31
Al Ittihad	26	5	10	11	20	39	25
Bahla	26	5	9	12	28	35	24
Muscat (R)	26	5	7	14	21	33	22
Saham (R)	26	3	11	12	19	36	20
Nizwa (R)	26	4	8	14	15	43	20

SYRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tishreen (C)	26	19	5	2	46	17	62
Wathba	26	18	4	4	43	10	58
Al Jaish	26	13	7	6	38	22	46
Al Wahda	26	11	6	9	31	27	39
Ahli Halab	26	10	8	8	27	23	38
Al Taliya	26	9	9	8	30	28	36
Al Karama	26	8	11	7	24	20	35
Jableh	26	8	11	7	26	28	35
Foutoua	26	10	5	11	34	37	35
Hottin	26	10	4	12	31	33	34
Al Shorta	26	9	6	11	29	34	33
Al Horgelah	26	7	6	13	27	38	27
Al Nawaeir (R)	26	2	9	15	21	43	15
Efrin (R)	26	0	5	21	18	65	5

THAILAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Buriram United (C)	30	19	5	6	48	19	62
BG Pathum United	30	17	9	4	52	27	60
Bangkok United	30	15	8	7	53	30	53
Muang Thong United	30	13	10	7	46	35	49
Chiangrai United	30	13	8	9	33	35	47
Nongbua Pitchaya	30	13	8	9	42	35	47
Chonburi	30	12	8	10	50	40	44
Port	30	11	6	13	41	37	39
Nakhonratchasima	30	10	7	13	33	47	37
Khonkaen United	30	10	7	13	30	43	37
Police Tero	30	8	13	9	33	39	37
Ratchaburi	30	9	9	12	32	36	36
Prachuap	30	8	7	15	30	45	31
Suphanburi (R)	30	8	6	16	35	49	30
Samut Prakan City (R)	30	6	10	14	29	42	28
Chiangmai United (R)	30	4	7	19	28	56	19

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ain (C)	26	20	5	1	57	17	65
Sharjah	26	17	4	5	46	25	55
Al Wahda	26	15	8	3	51	25	53
Al Jazira	26	14	3	9	42	34	45
Shabab Al Ahli	26	12	6	8	33	30	42
Al Wasl	26	9	9	8	36	30	36
Ajman	26	10	5	11	35	40	35
Al Nasr	26	9	6	11	42	38	33
Bani Yas	26	8	7	11	33	39	31
Khorfakkan	26	8	4	14	38	49	28
Kalba	26	6	10	10	32	38	28
Al Dhafra	26	6	6	14	28	36	24
Al Orooba (R)	26	3	9	14	25	57	18
Emirates (R)	26	2	4	20	21	61	10

SOUTH AMERICA

2022 COPA LIBERTADORES

Group Stage

Group A

May 3 – San Cristobal
Deportivo Tachira 1 (Uribe 37)
Emelec 4 (Rodriguez 3, 11, 59 pen, Cabeza 74)

May 3 – Sucre
Independiente Petrolero 0
Palmeiras 5 (Veiga 17 pen, 22, 60, Navarro 62, Murilo 74)

May 18 – Sao Paulo
Palmeiras 1 (Danilo 74)
Emelec 0

May 18 – San Cristobal
Deportivo Tachira 3 (Hernandez 22, 28, Simisterra 90+2)
Independiente Petrolero 0

May 24 – Sao Paulo
Palmeiras 4 (Scarpa 15, 22 pen, 68 pen, Rony 57)
Deportivo Tachira 1 (Gutierrez 48)

May 24 – Guayaquil
Emelec 7 (Cabeza 16, 35, Rodriguez 38, 77, Cevallos 45+1, Rojas 54, Quiroga 75)
Independiente Petrolero 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palmeiras (Q)	6	6	0	0	25	3	18
Emelec (Q)	6	2	2	2	14	7	8
Dep. Tachira	6	2	1	3	8	14	7
Ind. Petrolero	6	0	1	5	3	26	1

Group B

May 3 – Caracas
Caracas 1 (Akinyoola 51)
Libertad 0

May 3 – La Paz
The Strongest 5 (Triverio 32, 51, Prost 70, Cascini 90+1, Erick 90+4 og)
Athletico Paranaense 0

May 17 – Caracas
Caracas 0
The Strongest 0

May 18 – Curitiba
Athletico Paranaense 2 (Cuello 56, Canobbio 69)
Libertad 0

May 26 – Curitiba
Athletico Paranaense 5 (Pablo 19, 22, Christian 45+1, 71, Rocha 75)
Caracas 1 (Rivero 58)

May 26 – Asuncion
Libertad 4 (Melgarejo 25, Mendieta 55 pen, 90, Jusino 70 og)
The Strongest 1 (Ursino 41)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Ath. Paranaense (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
The Strongest	6	1	3	2	8	7	6
Caracas	6	1	3	2	4	8	6

Group C

May 3 – La Plata
Estudiantes 1 (Castro 41)
Nacional 0

May 5 – Braganca Paulista
Red Bull Bragantino 1 (Hurtado 84)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Pratto 14)

May 17 – Braganca Paulista
Red Bull Bragantino 0
Estudiantes 1 (Del Prete 77)

May 17 – Montevideo
Nacional 2 (Zabala 21, Gigliotti 89 pen)
Velez Sarsfield 3 (Janson 45, De los Santos 60, Perrone 90+4)

May 24 – Montevideo
Nacional 3 (Trezza 9, Candido 31, Cleiton 84 og)
Red Bull Bragantino 0

May 24 – Buenos Aires
Velez Sarsfield 4 (Janson 21, 43, Pratto 73, Osorio 83)
Estudiantes 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Estudiantes (Q)	6	4	1	1	8	5	13
Velez Sarsfield (Q)	6	2	2	2	12	11	8
Nacional	6	2	1	3	7	7	7
RB Bragantino	6	1	2	3	5	9	5

Group D

May 3 – Belo Horizonte
America Mineiro 1 (Conti 39)
Atletico Mineiro 2 (Arana 13, Fernandez 37)

May 4 – Ibague
Tolima 1 (Ibarguen 88)
Independiente del Valle 0

May 18 – Ibague
Tolima 2 (Plata 40, Rangel 43)
America Mineiro 2 (Marlon 7, Iago Maidana 27 pen)

May 19 – Belo Horizonte
Atletico Mineiro 3 (Hulk 9, 56, Savio 90+6)
Independiente del Valle 1 (Vargas 82)

May 25 – Belo Horizonte
Atletico Mineiro 1 (Eduardo Sasha 88)
Tolima 2 (Rangel 55, Lucumi 90+2)

May 25 – Quito
Independiente del Valle 3 (Sornoza 17, Gaibor 43, Chavez 74)
America Mineiro 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atl. Mineiro (Q)	6	3	2	1	10	6	11
Tolima (Q)	6	3	2	1	10	9	11
Ind. del Valle	6	2	2	2	9	7	8
Am. Mineiro	6	0	2	4	6	13	2

Group E

May 4 – Palmira
Deportivo Cali 0
Corinthians 0

May 4 – La Paz
Always Ready 0
Boca Juniors 1 (Salvio 37 pen)

May 17 – Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors 1 (Benedetto 42)
Corinthians 1 (Du Queiroz 16)

May 19 – Palmira
Deportivo Cali 3 (Vasquez 12, 55, Mosquera 74)
Always Ready 0

May 26 – Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors 1 (Varela 54)
Deportivo Cali 0

May 26 – Sao Paulo
Corinthians 1 (Adson 19)
Always Ready 1 (Borja 44)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca Juniors (Q)	6	3	1	2	5	5	10
Corinthians (Q)	6	2	3	1	5	4	9
Deportivo Cali	6	2	2	2	7	4	8
Always Ready	6	1	2	3	5	9	5

Group F

May 5 – Fortaleza
Fortaleza 1 (Romero 4)
River Plate 1 (Fernandez 17 pen)

May 5 – Lima
Alianza Lima 1 (Aguirre 46)
Colo-Colo 1 (Lucero 22)

May 18 – Lima
Alianza Lima 0
Fortaleza 2 (Moises 16, Yago Pikachu 80)

May19 – Buenos Aires
River Plate 4 (Palavecino 42, De la Cruz 52, Martinez 66, Barco 68)
Colo-Colo 0

May 25 – Buenos Aires
River Plate 8 (Alvarez 15, 18, 41, 54, 57, 83, Simon 53, Gomez 79
Alianza Lima 1 (Lavandeira 89 pen)

May 25 – Santiago
Colo-Colo 3 (Ceballos 45 og, 64 og, Gil 80)
Fortaleza 4 (Romero 3, Moises 25, 54, Yago Pikachu 61)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
River Plate (Q)	6	5	1	0	18	3	16
Fortaleza (Q)	6	3	1	2	10	9	10
Colo-Colo	6	2	1	3	9	13	7
Alianza Lima	6	0	1	5	4	16	1

Group G

May 4 – Santa Fe
Colon 2 (Farias 22, Bernardi 69)
Cerro Porteno 1 (Moreno 73)

May 4 – Asuncion
Olimpia 1 (Salcedo 23)
Penarol 0

May 17 – Montevideo
Penarol 0
Cerro Porteno 0

May 18 – Santa Fe
Colon 2 (Lertora 41, 84)
Olimpia 1 (Quintana 7)

May 25 – Montevideo
Penarol 2 (Ceppelini 48, Menosse 90+7)
Colon 1 (Farias 32)

May 25 – Asuncion
Cerro Porteno 0
Olimpia 1 (F. Cardozo 10)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colon (Q)	6	3	1	2	8	8	10
Cerro Porteno (Q)	6	2	2	2	5	4	8
Olimpia	6	2	2	2	4	4	8
Penarol	6	2	1	3	5	6	7

Group H

May 4 – Cordoba
Talleres 2 (Arao 34 og, Santos 74)
Flamengo 2 (De Arrascaeta 50, Pedro 69)

May 4 – Lima
Sporting Cristal 1 (Liza 43)
Universidad Catolica 1 (Zampedri 77)

May 17 – Rio deJaneiro
Flamengo 3 (Arao 7, Everton Ribeiro 39, Pedro 90)
Universidad Catolica 0

May 17 – Lima
Sporting Cristal 0
Talleres 0

May 24 – Rio deJaneiro
Flamengo 2 (Isla 30, Pedro 74)
Sporting Cristal 1 (Gonzales 85)

May 24 – Santiago
Universidad Catolica 0
Talleres 1 (Esquivel 61)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Flamengo (Q)	6	5	1	0	15	6	16
Talleres (Q)	6	3	2	1	6	5	11
U. Catolica	6	1	1	4	5	10	4
Sporting Cristal	6	0	2	4	3	8	2

2022 COPA SUDAMERICANA

Group Stage

Group A

May 4 – Caracas
Metropolitanos 0
Montevideo Wanderers 1 (Mendez 45+1)

May 4 – Guayaquil
Barcelona SC 1 (Sand 41 og)
Lanus 1 (Sand 53)

May 19 – Lanus
Lanus 1 (Bernabei 84)
Montevideo Wanderers 2 (Mendez 87, Bravo 90+2)

May 19 – Caracas
Metropolitanos 2 (Gomez 35, Anton 78)
Barcelona SC 2 (Diaz 45+4 pen, Garces 52)

May 25 – Lanus
Lanus 1 (Braghieri 51)
Metropolitanos 0

May 25 – Montevideo
Montevideo Wanderers 0
Barcelona SC 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lanus (Q)	6	3	2	1	7	4	11
Barcelona SC	6	2	3	1	9	8	9
Montevideo W.	6	2	2	2	6	7	8
Metropolitanos	6	0	3	3	3	6	3

Group B

May 3 – Montevideo
River Plate 1 (Lavega 90+3)
Melgar 2 (Cuesta 22, Archimbaud 90+5)

May 3 – Cuiaba
Cuiaba 1 (Marllon 29)
Racing Club 2 (Moreno 47, Copetti 59)

May 18 – Avellaneda
Racing Club 1 (Chancalay 44)
Melgar 0

May 18 – Montevideo
River Plate 1 (Clar 90+6)
Cuiaba 2 (Andre Luis 43, 90)

May 26 – Avellaneda
Racing Club 0
River Plate 1 (Salaberry 66)

May 26 – Arequipa
Melgar 3 (Archimbaud 38, Bordacahar 85, 89)
Cuiaba 1 (Gustavo 61)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Melgar (Q)	6	4	0	2	10	6	12
Racing Club	6	4	0	2	7	5	12
Cuiaba	6	2	0	4	7	10	6
River Plate	6	2	0	4	5	8	6

Group C

May 5 – Banfield
Banfield 0
Union Calera 1 (Saez 76)

May 5 – Quito
Universidad Catolica 0
Santos 1 (Rwan 90+1)

May 17 – Banfield
Banfield 1 (Datolo 82)
Universidad Catolica 1 (Diaz 90+2)

May 18 – Santos
Santos 1 (Lucas Barbosa 90+12)
Union Calera 0

May 24 – Santos
Santos 1 (Marcos Leonardo 37 pen)
Banfield 1 (Domingo 45+1)

May 24 – Vina del Mar
Union Calera 3 (Cavalleri 6, Saez 28, Vidangossy 72)
Universidad Catolica 2 (Clavijo 38, Rivas 88 pen)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos (Q)	6	3	2	1	7	5	11
Union Calera	6	3	2	1	6	4	11
U. Catolica	6	1	2	3	7	8	5
Banfield	6	1	2	3	3	6	5

Group D

May 5 – Vina del Mar
Everton 0
Sao Paulo 0

May 5 – Cusco
Ayacucho 0
Jorge Wilstermann 0

May 18 – Cusco
Ayacucho 0
Everton 2 (Di Yorio 58, Campos Lopez 65)

May 19 – Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo 3 (Rodrigo Nestor 6, 17, Patrick 47)
Jorge Wilstermann 0

May 25 – Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo 1 (Caio 72)
Ayacucho 0

May 25 – Cochabamba
Jorge Wilstermann 0
Everton 2 (Sosa 83, Cuevas 90)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo (Q)	6	5	1	0	12	3	16
Everton	6	3	2	1	7	4	11
Ayacucho	6	1	1	4	5	8	4
J. Wilstermann	6	0	2	4	2	11	2

Group E

May 3 – Manta
9 de Octubre 3 (Stephens 32, 68 pen, Becerra 57)
Independiente Medellin 2 (Lopez 36, Camargo 65)

May 5 – Asuncion
Guairena 1 (Otazu 33 pen)
Internacional 1 (Wanderson 52)

May 17 – Porto Alegre
Internacional 2 (Edenilson 19, 57)
Independiente Medellin 0

May 17 – Manta
9 de Octubre 2 (Da Luz 7, Stephens 74)
Guairena 3 (Otazu 52 pen, 62, Maciel 90+5)

May 24 – Porto Alegre
Internacional 5 (Dourado 9, 49, 75, Quinonez 66 og, Estevao 83)
9 de Octubre 1 (Caicedo 11)

May 24 – Pereira
Independiente Medellin 1 (Cambindo 27)
Guairena 1 (Duarte 60)

Final standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Internacional (Q)	6	3	3	0	12	5	12
Guairena	6	2	4	0	10	8	10
Ind. Medellin	6	1	2	3	8	11	5
9 de Octubre	6	1	1	4	9	15	4

Group F

May 4 – Goiania
Atletico Goianiense 3 (Marlon 18 pen, Shaylon 46, Unsain 54 og)
Defensa y Justicia 2 (Fontana 64, Albertengo 86)

May 4 – Antofagasta
Deportes Antofagasta 1 (M. Lopez 18)
LDU Quito 2 (Angulo 52, A. Lopez 67)

May 17 – Goiania
Atletico Goianiense 1 (Jorginho 12)
Deportes Antofagasta 0

May 18 – Quito
LDU Quito 2 (Quintero 5, Angulo 71)
Defensa y Justicia 2 (Albertengo 29, 44)

May 24 – Quito
LDU Quito 1 (Hoyos 29)
Atletico Goianiense 1 (Baralhas 65)

May 24 – Florencio Varela
Defensa y Justicia 0
Deportes Antofagasta 2 (Hurtado 42, Lopez 73)

Final standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atl. Goianiense (Q)	6	4	1	1	11	5	13
LDU Quito	6	3	2	1	11	9	11
D. Antofagasta	6	2	0	4	6	11	6
Defensa y Justicia	6	1	1	4	8	11	4

Group G

May 3 – Fortaleza
Ceara 3 (Mendoza 59, Vina 66, Erick 76)
Deportivo La Guaira 0

May 4 – Asuncion
General Caballero (JLM) 0
Independiente 4 (Blanco 42 pen, Pozzo 58, Fernandez 87, Sonora 90+4)

May 17 – Fortaleza
Ceara 6 (Wescley 6, Cleber 18, 32, Mendoza 72, 78, Ze Roberto 84)
General Caballero (JLM) 0

May 19 – Avellaneda
Independiente 4 (Cumana 41 og, Benegas 47, 90, Roa 83)
Deportivo La Guaira 0

May 25 – Avellaneda
Independiente 0
Ceara 2 (Lindoso 45+5, Mendoza 90+1)

May 25 – Caracas
Deportivo La Guaira 0
General Caballero (JLM) 1 (Fernandez 32)

Final standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ceara (Q)	6	6	0	0	17	1	18
Independiente	6	4	0	2	13	4	12
Gen. Caballero	6	1	1	4	2	15	4
Dep. La Guaira	6	0	1	5	1	13	1

Group H

May 4 – Rio de Janeiro
Fluminense 2 (Ganso 4, Luiz Henrique 73)
Junior 1 (Borja 55)

May 5 – Santa Fe
Union 2 (Luna Diale 12, Roldan 56)
Oriente Petrolero 0

May 17 – Barranquilla
Junior 2 (Borja 23 pen, 28)
Oriente Petrolero 0

May 19 – Santa Fe
Union 0
Fluminense 0

May 26 – Barranquilla
Junior 0
Union 4 (Albornoz 2 og, Alvez 41, Zenon 47, Gallegos 89)

May 26 – Santa Cruz de la Sierra
Oriente Petrolero 1 (Alvarez 15)
Fluminense 10 (Matheus Martins 1, 40, 54, Cano 9, 13, 58, Arias 17, Caio Paulista 36, Manoel 66, Willian 75)

Final standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Union (Q)	6	3	3	0	10	2	12
Fluminense	6	3	2	1	15	5	11
Junior	6	3	1	2	10	8	10
O. Petrolero	6	0	0	6	3	23	0

Final Tables 2021-22

ARGENTINA

Copa de la Liga Zone A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Racing Club*	14	8	6	0	25	10	30
River Plate*	14	9	2	3	31	12	29
Defensa y Justicia*	14	7	4	3	26	19	25
Argentinos Juniors*	14	7	4	3	21	16	25
Gimnasia La Plata	14	7	3	4	24	20	24
Newell's Old Boys	14	7	2	5	17	15	23
Sarmiento	14	6	3	5	17	24	21
Banfield	14	5	4	5	18	15	19
Union	14	5	2	7	11	13	17
San Lorenzo	14	3	6	5	15	17	15
Atletico Tucuman	14	2	5	7	13	23	11
Talleres	14	3	2	9	9	21	11
Platense	14	2	4	8	12	23	10
Patronato	14	3	1	10	10	25	10

*Qualify for the final stages

Copa de la Liga Zone B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Estudiantes*	14	8	4	2	33	20	28
Boca Juniors*	14	7	6	1	19	11	27
Tigre*	14	5	5	4	17	12	20
Aldosivi*	14	6	2	6	17	16	20
Barracas Central	14	6	1	7	17	24	19
Velez Sarsfield	14	4	6	4	13	12	18
Huracan	14	5	3	6	17	19	18
Arsenal	14	3	8	3	20	19	17
Colon	14	3	7	4	18	19	16
Independiente	14	3	7	4	17	18	16
Godoy Cruz	14	3	7	4	21	24	16
Lanus	14	3	6	5	17	18	15
Central Cordoba	14	3	6	5	17	23	15
Rosario Central	14	4	2	8	16	20	14

*Qualify for the final stages

Final Stages

Quarter-Finals

May 10 – Avellaneda
Racing Club 5 (Alcaraz 2, 21, Copetti 46 pen, 56, Correa 77)
Aldosivi 0

May 10 – Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors 2 (Villa 40, Ramirez 77)
Defensa y Justicia 0

May 11 – La Plata
Estudiantes 1 (Boselli 31)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Vera 64)
Argentinos Juniors win 4-3 on penalties

May 11 – Buenos Aires
River Plate 1 (Fernandez 57)
Tigre 2 (Retegui 4, Colidio 66)

Semi-Finals

May 15 – Lanus
Boca Juniors 0
Racing Club 0
Boca Juniors win 6-5 on penalties

May 15 – Bueno Aires
Tigre 1 (Castro 54)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Avalos 87)
Tigre win 3-1 on penalties

Final

May 22 – Cordoba
Boca Juniors 3 (Rojo 45+3, Fabra 67, Vazquez 85)
Tigre 0

CONCACAF

2022 CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final – 1st leg

Apr 27 – Mexico City
UNAM Pumas 2 (Dinenno 38 pen, 48)
Seattle Sounders 2 (Lodeiro 77 pen, 90+9 pen)

Final – 2nd leg

May 4 – Seattle
Seattle Sounders 3 (Ruidiaz 45, 80, Lodeiro 88)
UNAM Pumas 0
Seattle Sounders win 5-2 on aggregate

Final Tables 2021-22

ARUBA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
RCA*	18	14	4	0	69	9	46
Dakota*	18	15	0	3	76	16	45
Britannia*	18	10	4	4	46	23	34
La Fama*	18	10	2	6	36	28	32
Nacional	18	9	2	7	66	34	29
Caravel	18	7	3	8	29	56	24
River Plate	18	6	2	10	35	42	20
Estrella**	18	4	2	12	31	65	14
United**	18	3	2	13	35	74	11
Bubali (R)	18	1	1	16	8	84	4

*Qualify for the final stages
*Estrella & United enter the relegation play-off

COSTA RICA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alajuelense*	22	13	3	6	36	19	42
Herediano*	22	9	9	4	32	19	36
Cartagines*	22	10	4	8	45	36	34
Deportivo Saprissa*	22	10	4	8	30	30	34
San Carlos	22	9	7	6	31	31	34
Sporting San Jose	22	8	6	8	29	28	30
Guadalupe	22	8	5	9	32	37	29
Santos de Guapiles	22	7	5	10	28	31	26
Municipal Grecia	22	7	5	10	26	31	26
Jicaral	22	6	7	9	25	35	25
Perez Zeledon	22	5	8	9	25	29	23
Guanacasteca	22	5	7	10	23	36	22

*Qualify for the Clausura final stages

CUBA

Apertura Group A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Artemisa*	14	11	2	1	39	12	35
La Habana	13	8	2	3	27	13	26
Cienfuegos	14	7	4	3	28	20	26
Villa Clara	13	7	2	4	19	14	23
Pinar del Rio	13	4	5	4	13	14	17
Matanzas	12	3	2	7	12	23	11
Mayabeque	13	1	1	11	6	32	4
Isla Juventud	10	1	0	9	8	24	3

*Qualify for the final

Apertura Group B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santiago de Cuba*	14	12	1	1	32	8	37
Camaguey	14	8	3	3	24	14	27
Las Tunas	13	8	2	3	19	8	26
Guantanamo	14	6	5	3	20	10	23
Granma	14	4	5	5	17	15	17
Ciego de Avila	14	3	3	8	6	21	12
Holguin	13	2	3	8	8	20	9
Sancti Spiritus	14	0	2	12	1	31	2

*Qualify for the final

Final

May 15: Santiago de Cuba 7-0 Artemisa

EL SALVADOR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alianza*	22	12	6	4	33	21	42
Aguila*	22	11	8	3	36	15	41
Chalatenango*	22	11	5	6	30	25	38
Platense*	22	8	7	7	24	22	31
FAS*	22	7	9	6	31	30	30
Isidro Metapan*	22	6	11	5	25	21	29
Jocoro*	22	7	7	8	28	33	28
Firpo*	22	6	7	9	23	22	25
Municipal Limeno	22	6	7	9	18	27	25
Once Deportivo	22	5	8	9	16	22	23
Atletico Marte	22	4	8	10	19	32	20
Santa Tecla	22	4	7	11	19	32	19

*Qualify for the Clausura final stages

Final Stages

Quarter-Finals

May 10-12: Jocoro 1-2 Aguila; FAS 0-1 Platense; Firpo 1-2 Alianza; Isidro Metapan 1-0 Chalatenango
May 15: Aguila 1-1 Jocoro (agg 3-2); Platense 2-1 FAS (agg 3-1); Alianza 2-1 Firpo (agg 4-2); Chalatenango 1-2 Isidro Metapan (agg 1-3)

Semi-Finals

May 18-19: Platense 1-0 Alianza; Isidro Metapan 1-2 Aguila
May 22: Alianza 3-1 Platense (agg 3-2); Aguila 2-1 Isidro Metapan (agg 4-2)

Final

May 29: Alianza 1-1 Aguila
Alianza win 5-4 on penalties

GUATEMALA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Comunicaciones*	22	12	5	5	39	24	41
Municipal*	22	12	4	6	34	18	40
Guastatoya*	22	10	7	5	32	18	37
Malacateco*	22	9	8	5	29	22	35
Coban Imperial*	22	9	7	6	29	25	34
Antigua GFC*	22	9	6	7	33	22	33
Achuapa*	22	9	6	7	21	19	33
Santa Lucia*	22	8	4	10	36	27	28
Iztapa	22	7	7	8	30	31	28
Xelaju	22	6	5	11	17	31	23
Solola	22	4	6	12	21	44	18
Nueva Concepcion	22	3	3	16	19	59	12

*Qualify for the Clausura final stages

HONDURAS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Espana*	18	12	1	5	34	21	37
Olimpia*	18	10	2	6	31	15	32
Victoria**	18	10	2	6	31	19	32
Motagua**	18	8	4	6	25	16	28
Vida**	18	7	4	7	26	26	25
Marathon**	18	7	2	9	24	25	23
Honduras Progreso	18	6	5	7	26	30	23
Platense	18	6	5	7	14	20	23
Real Sociedad	18	5	2	11	19	42	17
UPNFM	18	4	3	11	16	32	15

*Qualify for the Clausura final stages
**Qualify for the Clausura final stage play-offs

Final Stages

Play-Offs

May 5-6: Vida 0-3 Motagua; Marathon 4-1 Victoria
May 8-9: Victoria 1-1 Marathon (agg 2-5); Motagua 0-0 Vida (agg 3-0)

Semi-Finals

May 12-13: Marathon 0-2 Real Espana; Motagua 1-1 Olimpia
May 15-16: Real Espana 1-1 Marathon (agg 3-1); Olimpia 0-1 Motagua (agg 1-2)

Final

May 23: Motagua 3-0 Real Espana
May 29: Real Espana 2-0 Motagua (agg 2-3)

MARTINIQUE

Regular Season Group A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Golden Lion*	18	13	4	1	55	17	61
Trenelle*	18	11	4	3	33	15	55
US Robert*	18	10	3	5	22	16	51
Samaritaine	18	9	4	5	30	17	48
RC Saint Joseph	18	6	7	5	30	19	43
Diamantinoise	18	5	9	4	25	23	42
RC Lorrain**	18	4	4	8	21	30	37
Olympique**	18	3	6	9	18	30	33
Riviere-Pilote (R)	18	4	1	13	18	45	31
Eclair*** (R)	18	2	2	14	11	51	25

Win = 4 points; Draw = 2 points; Loss = 1 point
Qualify for the Championship Round
**RC Lorrain & Olympique enter the relegation round*
***Eclair deducted 1 point*

Regular Season Group B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Colonial*	18	14	4	0	46	12	64
Club Franciscain*	18	12	4	2	55	18	58
Aiglon*	18	11	3	4	30	17	54
Golden Star	18	7	6	5	22	20	45
Case-Pilote	17	7	3	7	25	25	41
Assaut	18	6	5	7	22	24	41
Riveraine**	18	5	5	8	21	20	38
New Star**	18	2	7	9	10	34	31
Essor-Prechotain (R)	18	4	2	12	22	52	31
Monnerot (R)	17	0	3	14	8	39	20

Win = 4 points; Draw = 2 points; Loss = 1 point
**Qualify for the Championship Round*
***Riveraine & New Star enter the relegation round*

MEXICO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pachuca*	17	12	2	3	30	15	38
Tigres UANL*	17	10	3	4	30	20	33
Atlas*	17	7	6	4	21	15	27
America*	17	7	5	5	24	17	26
Puebla**	17	7	5	5	25	19	26
Guadalajara**	17	7	5	5	25	21	26
Monterrey**	17	7	5	5	21	17	26
Cruz Azul**	17	7	4	6	20	17	25
Necaxa**	17	7	2	8	21	21	23
Atletico San Luis**	17	7	2	8	21	22	23
UNAM Pumas**	17	6	4	7	24	21	22
Mazatlan**	17	6	3	8	20	24	21
Leon	17	5	6	6	17	22	21
Santos Laguna	17	5	5	7	25	25	20
Toluca	17	5	4	8	21	36	19
Queretaro	17	3	8	6	18	21	17
Tijuana	17	4	5	8	14	26	17
Juarez	17	3	2	12	10	28	11

**Qualify for the Clausura final phase*
***Qualify for the Clausura reclassification*

Final Phase

Reclassification

May 7 – Mexico City
Cruz Azul 1 (Escobar 56)
Necaxa 1 (Aguirre 88)
Cruz Azul win 3-1 on penalties

May 7 – Guadalupe
Monterrey 2 (Janssen 18, Rodriguez 90+6)
Atletico San Luis 2 (Waller 47, Murillo 53)
Atletico San Luis win 3-1 on penalties

May 8 – Puebla
Puebla 2 (De Buen 4, Segovia 14)
Mazatlan 2 (Rubio 37, Vidrio 90+1)
Puebla win 3-1 on penalties

May 8 – Zapopan
Guadalajara 4 (Calderon 12, Beltran 51, Macias 87, Vega 89)
UNAM Pumas 1 (Diogo 19)

Quarter-Finals – 1st Leg

May 11 – San Luis Potosi
Atletico San Luis 2 (Berterame 25 pen, Sanabria 90+4)
Pachuca 2 (Ibanez 5, 77)

May 11 – Puebla
Puebla 1 (Aristeguieta 55)
America 1 (Caceres 80)

May 12 – Mexico City
Cruz Azul 0
Tigres UANL 1 (Duenas 44)

May 12 – Zapopan
Guadalajara 1 (Calderon 54)
Atlas 2 (Marquez 28, 44)

Quarter-Finals – 2nd Leg

May 14 – Pachuca
Pachuca 3 (Ibanez 47, 90+6, Cabral 67)
Atletico San Luis 2 (Chavez 52, Hernandez 90+3)
Pachuca win 5-4 on aggregate

May 14 – Mexico City
America 3 (Martin 42, Valdes 58 pen, Zendejas 73)
Puebla 2 (Reyes 45+2, Aristeguieta 90+7 pen)
America win 4-3 on aggregate

May 15 – San Nicolas de los Garza
Tigres UANL 0
Cruz Azul 1 (Tabo 19)
1–1 on aggregate. Tigres UANL advance due to finishing higher in the Clausura league table

May 15 – Guadalajara
Atlas 1 (Chala 45+5)
Guadalajara 1 (Macias 89)
Atlas win 3-2 on aggregate

Semi-Finals – 1st Leg

May 18 – Guadalajara
Atlas 3 (Furch 40, Reyes 60, Quinones 90)
Tigres UANL 0

May 19 – Mexico City
America 1 (Valdes 54)
Pachuca 1 (Ibanez 82 pen)

Semi-Finals – 2nd Leg

May 21 – San Nicolas de los Garza
Tigres UANL 4 (Gignac 54 pen, 59, 74 pen, Lichnovsky 81)
Atlas 2 (Quinones 45, Rocha 90+10 pen)
Atlas win 5-4 on aggregate

May 22 – Pachuca
Pachuca 3 (Ibarra 13, 66, Sanchez 44)
America 0
Pachuca win 4-1 on aggregate

Final – 1st Leg

May 27 – Guadalajara
Atlas 2 (Reyes 26, Quinones 90+3)
Pachuca 0

Final – 2nd Leg

May 30 – Pachuca
Pachuca 2 (Ibarra 8, Ibanez 45+9)
Atlas 1 (Furch 45 pen)
Atlas win 3-2 on aggregate

NICARAGUA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Diriangen*	18	11	4	3	41	17	37
Real Esteli*	18	9	5	4	37	21	32
Walter Ferretti**	18	9	3	6	36	21	30
Managua**	18	8	3	7	26	22	27
Juventus Managua**	18	7	2	9	24	25	23
H&H Export**	18	5	8	5	30	36	23
Municipal Jalapa	18	6	5	7	13	26	23
UNAN Managua	18	4	8	6	21	30	20
Deportivo Ocotal	18	4	5	9	12	23	17
Real Madriz	18	3	5	10	10	29	14

**Qualify for the Clausura final stages*
***Qualify for the Clausura final stage play-off*

Final Stages

Play-Off

May 6: Walter Ferretti 1-0 H&H Export; Managua 4-3 Juventus Managua

Semi-Finals

May 8-9: Walter Ferretti 2-3 Real Esteli; Managua 1-1 Diriangen
May 12: Real Esteli 0-2 Walter Ferretti (agg 3-4); Diriangen 1-0 Managua (agg 2-1)

Final

May 16: Walter Ferretti 0-2 Diriangen
May 22: Diriangen 0-2 Walter Ferretti (agg p2-2)

PANAMA

Apertura East	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting San Miguelito*	16	9	6	1	24	11	33
Alianza**	16	8	5	3	15	7	29
Tauro**	16	8	3	5	20	11	27
Plaza Amador	16	6	8	2	26	18	26
Deportivo del Este	16	3	7	6	15	22	16
Arabe Unido	16	1	7	8	4	15	10

**Qualify for the Apertura final stages*
***Qualify for the Apertura final stage play-off*

Apertura West	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atletico Chiriqui*	16	8	4	4	21	20	28
Independiente**	16	8	2	6	23	20	26
Herrera**	16	4	9	3	20	15	21
San Francisco	16	5	5	6	18	14	20
Veraguas	16	2	6	8	14	27	12
Universitario	16	2	2	12	8	28	8

**Qualify for the Apertura final stages*
***Qualify for the Apertura final stages play-off*

Final Stages

Play-Off

May 11-12: Alianza 2-0 Herrera; Independiente 1-2 Tauro

Semi-Finals

May 15-16: Alianza 1-0 Atletico Chiriqui; Tauro 1-2 Sporting San Miguelito
May 22-23: Atletico Chiriqui 1-1 Alianza (agg 1-2); Sporting San Miguelito 0-0 Tauro (agg 2-1)

Final

May 29: Sporting San Miguelito 1-2 Alianza

Internationals

2021 SOUTHEAST ASIAN GAMES

Group A

May 6: Philippines 4-0 Timor-Leste; Vietnam 3-0 Indonesia
May 8: Timor-Leste 2-3 Myanmar; Vietnam 0-0 Philippines
May 10: Myanmar 3-2 Philippines; Indonesia 4-1 Timor-Leste
May 13: Philippines 0-4 Indonesia; Myanmar 0-1 Vietnam
May 15: Indonesia 3-1 Myanmar; Timor-Leste 0-2 Vietnam

Final standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Vietnam (Q)	4	3	1	0	6	0	10
Indonesia (Q)	4	3	0	1	11	5	9
Myanmar	4	2	0	2	7	8	6
Philippines	4	1	1	2	6	7	4
Timor-Leste	4	0	0	4	3	13	0

Group B

May 7: Singapore 2-2 Laos; Thailand 1-2 Malaysia
May 9: Laos 1-4 Cambodia; Thailand 5-0 Singapore
May 11: Cambodia 0-1 Singapore; Malaysia 3-1 Laos
May 14: Singapore 2-2 Malaysia; Cambodia 0-5 Thailand
May 16: Malaysia 2-2 Cambodia; Laos 0-1 Thailand

Final standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Thailand (Q)	4	3	0	1	12	2	9
Malaysia (Q)	4	2	2	0	9	6	8
Singapore	4	1	2	1	5	9	5
Cambodia	4	1	1	2	6	9	4
Laos	4	0	1	3	4	10	1

Semi-Finals

May 19 – Nam Dinh
Thailand 1 (Weerathep 95)
Indonesia 0
After Extra-Time

May 19 – Phu Tho
Vietnam 1 (Nguyen Tien Linh 111)
Malaysia 0
After Extra-Time

Bronze Medal Match

May 22 – Hanoi
Malaysia 1 (Hadi 81)
Indonesia 1 (Ronaldo 69)
AET. Indonesia win 4-3 on penalties

Gold Medal Match

May 22 – Hanoi
Vietnam 1 (Nham Manh Dung 83)
Thailand 0

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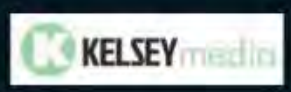

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Safet Susic

Romania 4 Yugoslavia 6

World Cup qualifier, 1977, Bucharest

Before the modern, Qatar-owned era, Safet Susic was widely considered the finest player in Paris Saint-Germain's history. Before making his name in France though, he was on his way to becoming a legend of Yugoslavian football – starting with a hat-trick on the road to the 1978 World Cup in Argentina...

"I must admit that I have forgotten many games and goals from my career. I guess it's normal, as it was quite a long time ago. But that game against Romania cannot be forgotten. I remember everything, as if it was played last week, rather than 45 years ago.

It was not a good moment for our national team. After two defeats in the first two games of that campaign [1-0 in Spain and 2-0 at home against Romania], we were written off. It is true that we still had a tiny, theoretical chance, but nobody believed in it. To be honest, we didn't believe in it. There was a change of generations, as some big players like [Dragan] Dzajic, [Branko] Oblak, [Josip] Katalinski and others had finished their international careers. For the match in Bucharest many new players were selected and we started with a team that had little experience on the international scene.

I was also among the newcomers; it was only my second game for Yugoslavia. Of course it helped that I scored twice on my debut a few weeks earlier against Hungary [a 4-3 friendly defeat in Budapest].

We went into the game without any big pressure, as nobody expected anything from us. We had nothing to lose, while for the hosts it was a must-win game.

It was a weird, spectacular match, like a rollercoaster. Romania took the lead in the second minute with a bizarre goal from a free-kick from more than 40 metres. But we fought back and we managed to equalise quite quickly. We had a counter-attack, Zungul sent a low cross from the left-hand side and I scored from close range with my first touch. Later we went 2-1 up, but then we conceded another two goals and at half-time Romania were 3-2 up.

My second goal of the game made it 3-3. I received the ball near the halfway line, started a solo run, went past two defenders, and when I entered the box I saw the keeper coming out so I placed the ball into the goal.

Yugoslav star... Susic went on to play in two World Cups after failing to qualify in 1977

My third goal came after a free-kick for us. Trifunovic rolled the ball to me and I scored with a powerful shot from just outside the box. The Romanian goalkeeper [Dumitru Moraru] didn't look good, but, as I said, it was a crazy game with plenty of mistakes on both sides.

In the end we celebrated a 6-4 win, but it's a shame that we didn't score another goal. With a 7-4 win, we would have gone through against Spain with any victory, rather than the pressure of having to win by two goals, which proved too big a burden for us. Eventually we lost 1-0 to Spain, who were the better team and who deservedly qualified for the World Cup.

> "It was only my second game for Yugoslavia...I scored twice on my debut a few weeks earlier"

Luckily I did later play at two World Cups with Yugoslavia [1982 in Spain and 1990 in Italy], but I will remember that match against Romania until the end of my life."

Interview by Vladimir Novak

PSG legend...Susic in action for the French giants

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